THE CROSSING

WINSTON CHURCHILL

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In the Garden at Temple Bow.

THE CROSSING

BY

WINSTON CHURCHILL

AUTHOR OF "RICHARD CARVEL," "THE CRISIS,"
"THE CELEBRITY," ETC., ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY SYDNEY ADAMSON
AND LILIAN BAYLISS

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THE CROSSING

BOOK I

THE BORDERLAND

CHAPTER I

THE BLUE WALL

I WAS born under the Blue Ridge, and under that side which is blue in the evening light, in a wild land of game and forest and rushing waters. There, on the borders of a creek that runs into the Yadkin River, in a cabin that was chinked with red mud, I came into the world a subject of King George the Third, in that part of his realm known as the province of North Carolina.

The cabin reeked of corn-pone and bacon, and the odor of pelts. It had two shakedowns, on one of which I slept under a bearskin. A rough stone chimney was reared outside, and the fireplace was as long as my father was tall. There was a crane in it, and a bake kettle; and over it great buckhorns held my father's rifle when it was not in use. On other horns hung jerked bear's meat and venison hams, and gourds for drinking cups, and bags of seed, and my father's best hunting shirt; also, in a neglected corner, several articles of woman's attire from pegs. These once belonged to my mother. Among them was a gown of silk, of a fine, faded pattern, over which I was wont to speculate. The women at the Cross-Roads, twelve miles away, were dressed in coarse butternut wool and huge sunbonnets. But when I questioned my father on these matters he would give me no answers.

My father was — how shall I say what he was? To this day I can only surmise many things of him. He was a Scotchman born, and I know now that he had a slight Scotch accent. At the time of which I write, my early childhood, he was a frontiersman and hunter. I can see him now, with his hunting shirt and leggings and moccasins; his powder horn, engraved with wondrous scenes; his bullet pouch and tomahawk and hunting knife. He was a tall, lean man with a strange, sad face. And he talked little save when he drank too many "horns," as they were called in that country. These lapses of my father's were a perpetual source of wonder to me, — and, I must say, of delight. They occurred only when a passing traveller who hit his fancy chanced that way, or, what was almost as rare, a neighbor. Many a winter night I have lain awake under the skins, listening to a flow of language that held me spellbound, though I understood scarce a word of it.

> "Virtuous and vicious every man must be,
> Few in the extreme, but all in a degree."

The chance neighbor or traveller was no less struck with wonder. And many the time have I heard the query, at the Cross-Roads and elsewhere, "Whar Alec Trimble got his larnin'?"

The truth is, my father was an object of suspicion to the frontiersmen. Even as a child I knew this, and resented it. He had brought me up in solitude, and I was old for my age, learned in some things far beyond my years, and ignorant of others I should have known. I loved the man passionately. In the long winter evenings, when the howl of wolves and "painters" rose as the wind lulled, he taught me to read from the Bible and the "Pilgrim's Progress." I can see his long, slim fingers on the page. They seemed but ill fitted for the life he led.

The love of rhythmic language was somehow born into me, and many's the time I have held watch in the cabin day and night while my father was away on his hunts, spelling out the verses that have since become part of my life.

As I grew older I went with him into the mountains, often on his back; and spent the nights in open camp with my little moccasins drying at the blaze. So I learned to skin a bear, and fleece off the fat for oil with my hunting knife; and cure a deerskin and follow a trail. At seven I even shot the long rifle, with a rest. I learned to endure cold and hunger and fatigue and to walk in silence over the mountains, my father never saying a word for days at a spell. And often, when he opened his mouth, it would be to recite a verse of Pope's in a way that moved me strangely. For a poem is not a poem unless it be well spoken.

In the hot days of summer, over against the dark forest the bright green of our little patch of Indian corn rippled in the wind. And towards night I would often sit watching the deep blue of the mountain wall and dream of the mysteries of the land that lay beyond. And by chance, one evening as I sat thus, my father reading in the twilight, a man stood before us. So silently had he come up the path leading from the brook that we had not heard him. Presently my father looked up from his book, but did not rise. As for me, I had been staring for some time in astonishment, for he was a better-looking man than I had ever seen. He wore a deerskin hunting shirt dyed black, but, in place of a coonskin cap with the tail hanging down, a hat. His long rifle rested on the ground, and he held a roan horse by the bridle.

"Howdy, neighbor?" said he.

I recall a fear that my father would not fancy him. In such cases he would give a stranger food, and leave him to himself. My father's whims were past understanding. But he got up.

"Good evening," said he.

The visitor looked a little surprised, as I had seen many do, at my father's accent.

"Neighbor," said he, "kin you keep me over night?"

"Come in," said my father.

We sat down to our supper of corn and beans and venison, of all of which our guest ate sparingly. He, too, was

a silent man, and scarcely a word was spoken during the meal. Several times he looked at me with such a kindly expression in his blue eyes, a trace of a smile around his broad mouth, that I wished he might stay with us always. But once, when my father said something about Indians, the eyes grew hard as flint. It was then I remarked, with a boy's wonder, that despite his dark hair he had yellow eyebrows.

After supper the two men sat on the log step, while I set about the task of skinning the deer my father had shot that day. Presently I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder.

"What's your name, lad?" he said.

I told him Davy.

"Davy, I'll larn ye a trick worth a little time," said he, whipping out a knife. In a trice the red carcass hung between the forked stakes, while I stood with my mouth open. He turned to me and laughed gently.

"Some day you'll cross the mountains and skin twenty of an evening," he said. "Ye'll make a woodsman sure. You've got the eye, and the hand."

This little piece of praise from him made me hot all over.

"Game rare?" said he to my father.

"None sae good, now," said my father.

"I reckon not. My cabin's on Beaver Creek some forty mile above, and game's going there, too."

"Settlements," said my father. But presently, after a few whiffs of his pipe, he added, "I hear fine things of this land across the mountains, that the Indians call the Dark and Bluidy Ground."

"And well named," said the stranger.

"But a brave country," said my father, "and all tramped down with game. I hear that Daniel Boone and others have gone into it and come back with marvellous tales. They tell me Boone was there alone three months. He's saething of a man. D'ye ken him?"

The ruddy face of the stranger grew ruddier still.

"My name's Boone," he said.

"What!" cried my father, "it wouldn't be Daniel?"

"You've guessed it, I reckon."

My father rose without a word, went into the cabin, and immediately reappeared with a flask and a couple of gourds, one of which he handed to our visitor.

"Tell me aboot it," said he.

That was the fairy tale of my childhood. Far into the night I lay on the dewy grass listening to Mr. Boone's talk. It did not at first flow in a steady stream, for he was not a garrulous man, but my father's questions presently fired his enthusiasm. I recall but little of it, being so small a lad, but I crept closer and closer until I could touch this superior being who had been beyond the Wall. Marco Polo was no greater wonder to the Venetians than Boone to me.

He spoke of leaving wife and children, and setting out for the Unknown with other woodsmen. He told how, crossing over our blue western wall into a valley beyond, they found a "Warrior's Path" through a gap across another range, and so down into the fairest of promised lands. And as he talked he lost himself in the tale of it, and the very quality of his voice changed. He told of a land of wooded hill and pleasant vale, of clear water running over limestone down to the great river beyond, the Ohio—a land of glades, the fields of which were pied with flowers of wondrous beauty, where roamed the buffalo in countless thousands, where elk and deer abounded, and turkeys and feathered game, and bear in the tall brakes of cane. And, simply, he told how, when the others had left him, he stayed for three months roaming the hills alone with Nature herself.

"But did you no' meet the Indians?" asked my father.

"I seed one fishing on a log once," said our visitor, laughing, "but he fell into the water. I reckon he was drowned."

My father nodded comprehendingly, — even admiringly.

"And again!" said he.

"Wal," said Mr. Boone, "we fell in with a war party of Shawnees going back to their lands north of the great river. The critters took away all we had. It was hard,"

he added reflectively; "I had staked my fortune on the venter, and we'd got enough skins to make us rich. But, neighbor, there is land enough for you and me, as black and rich as Canaan."

"'The Lord is my shepherd,'" said my father, lapsing into verse. "'The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He leadeth me into green pastures, and beside still waters.'"

For a time they were silent, each wrapped in his own thought, while the crickets chirped and the frogs sang. From the distant forest came the mournful hoot of an owl.

"And you are going back?" asked my father, presently.

"Aye, that I am. There are many families on the Yadkin below going, too. And you, neighbor, you might come with us. Davy is the boy that would thrive in that country."

My father did not answer. It was late indeed when we lay down to rest, and the night I spent between waking and dreaming of the wonderland beyond the mountains, hoping against hope that my father would go. The sun was just flooding the slopes when our guest arose to leave, and my father bade him God-speed with a heartiness that was rare to him. But, to my bitter regret, neither spoke of my father's going. Being a man of understanding, Mr. Boone knew it were little use to press. He patted me on the head.

"You're a wise lad, Davy," said he. "I hope we shall meet again."

He mounted his roan and rode away down the slope, waving his hand to us. And it was with a heavy heart that I went to feed our white mare, whinnying for food in the lean-to.

CHAPTER II

WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS

And so our life went on the same, but yet not the same. For I had the Land of Promise to dream of, and as I went about my tasks I conjured up in my mind pictures of its beauty. You will forgive a backwoods boy, — self-centred, for lack of wider interest, and with a little imagination. Bear hunting with my father, and an occasional trip on the white mare twelve miles to the Cross-Roads for salt and other necessaries, were the only diversions to break the routine of my days. But at the Cross-Roads, too, they were talking of Kaintuckee. For so the Land was called, the Dark and Bloody Ground.

The next year came a war on the Frontier, waged by Lord Dunmore, Governor of Virginia. Of this likewise I heard at the Cross-Roads, though few from our part seemed to have gone to it. And I heard there, for rumors spread over mountains, that men blazing in the new land were in danger, and that my hero, Boone, was gone out to save them. But in the autumn came tidings of a great battle far to the north, and of the Indians suing for peace.

The next year came more tidings of a sort I did not understand. I remember once bringing back from the Cross-Roads a crumpled newspaper, which my father read again and again, and then folded up and put in his pocket. He said nothing to me of these things. But the next time I went to the Cross-Roads, the woman asked me: —

"Is your Pa for the Congress?"

"What's that?" said I.

"I reckon he ain't," said the woman, tartly. I recall

her dimly, a slattern creature in a loose gown and bare feet, wife of the storekeeper and wagoner, with a swarm of urchins about her. They were all very natural to me thus. And I remember a battle with one of these urchins in the briers, an affair which did not add to the love of their family for ours. There was no money in that country, and the store took our pelts in exchange for what we needed from civilization. Once a month would I load these pelts on the white mare, and make the journey by the path down the creek. At times I met other settlers there, some of them not long from Ireland, with the brogue still in their mouths. And again, I saw the wagoner with his great canvas-covered wagon standing at the door, ready to start for the town sixty miles away. 'Twas he brought the news of this latest war.

One day I was surprised to see the wagoner riding up the path to our cabin, crying out for my father, for he was a violent man. And a violent scene followed. They remained for a long time within the house, and when they came out the wagoner's face was red with rage. My father, too, was angry, but no more talkative than usual.

"Ye say ye'll not help the Congress?" shouted the wagoner.

"I'll not," said my father.

"Ye'll live to rue this day, Alec Trimble," cried the man. "Ye may think ye're too fine for the likes of us, but there's them in the settlement that knows about ye."

With that he flung himself on his horse, and rode away. But the next time I went to the Cross-Roads the woman drove me away with curses, and called me an aristocrat. Wearily I tramped back the dozen miles up the creek, beside the mare, carrying my pelts with me; stumbling on the stones, and scratched by the dry briers. For it was autumn, the woods all red and yellow against the green of the pines. I sat down beside the old beaver dam to gather courage to tell my father. But he only smiled bitterly when he heard it. Nor would he tell me what the word *aristocrat* meant.

That winter we spent without bacon, and our salt gave

out at Christmas. It was at this season, if I remember rightly, that we had another visitor. He arrived about nightfall one gray day, his horse jaded and cut, and he was dressed all in wool, with a great coat wrapped about him, and high boots. This made me stare at him. When my father drew back the bolt of the door he, too, stared and fell back a step.

"Come in," said he.

"D'ye ken me, Alec?" said the man.

He was a tall, spare man like my father, a Scotchman, but his hair was in a cue.

"Come in, Duncan," said my father, quietly. "Davy, run out for wood."

Loath as I was to go, I obeyed. As I came back dragging a log behind me I heard them in argument, and in their talk there was much about the Congress, and a woman named Flora Macdonald, and a British fleet sailing southward.

"We'll have two thousand Highlanders and more to meet the fleet. And ye'll sit at hame, in this hovel ye've made yeresel" (and he glanced about disdainfully) "and no help the King?" He brought his fist down on the pine boards.

"Ye did no help the King greatly at Culloden, Duncan," said my father, dryly.

Our visitor did not answer at once.

"The Yankee Rebels 'll no help the House of Stuart," said he, presently. "And Hanover's coom to stay. Are ye, too, a Rebel, Alec Ritchie?"

I remember wondering why he said *Ritchie*.

"I'll no take a hand in this fight," answered my father.

And that was the end of it. The man left with scant ceremony, I guiding him down the creek to the main trail. He did not open his mouth until I parted with him.

"Puir Davy," said he, and rode away in the night, for the moon shone through the clouds.

I remember these things, I suppose, because I had nothing else to think about. And the names stuck in my memory, intensified by later events, until I began to write a diary.

And now I come to my travels. As the spring drew on I had had a feeling that we could not live thus forever, with no market for our pelts. And one day my father said to me abruptly: —

"Davy, we'll be travelling."

"Where?" I asked.

"Ye'll ken soon enough," said he. "We'll go at crack o' day."

We went away in the wild dawn, leaving the cabin desolate. We loaded the white mare with the pelts, and my father wore a woollen suit like that of our Scotch visitor, which I had never seen before. He had clubbed his hair. But, strangest of all, he carried in a small parcel the silk gown that had been my mother's. We had scant other baggage.

We crossed the Yadkin at a ford, and climbing the hills to the south of it we went down over stony traces, down and down, through rain and sun; stopping at rude cabins or taverns, until we came into the valley of another river. This I know now was the Catawba. My memories of that ride are as misty as the spring weather in the mountains. But presently the country began to open up into broad fields, some of these abandoned to pines. And at last, splashing through the stiff red clay that was up to the mare's fetlocks, we came to a place called Charlotte Town. What a day that was for me! And how I gaped at the houses there, finer than any I had ever dreamed of! That was my first sight of a town. And how I listened open-mouthed to the gentlemen at the tavern! One I recall had a fighting head with a lock awry, and a negro servant to wait on him, and was the principal spokesman. He, too, was talking of war. The Cherokees had risen on the western border. He was telling of the massacre of a settlement, in no mild language.

"Sirs," he cried, "the British have stirred the redskins to this. Will you sit here while women and children are scalped, and those devils" (he called them worse names) "Stuart and Cameron go unpunished?"

My father got up from the corner where he sat, and stood beside the man.

"I ken Alec Cameron," said he.

The man looked at him with amazement.

"Ay?" said he, "I shouldn't think you'd own it. Damn him," he cried, "if we catch him we'll skin him alive."

"I ken Cameron," my father repeated, "and I'll gang with you to skin him alive."

The man seized his hand and wrung it.

"But first I must be in Charlestown," said my father.

The next morning we sold our pelts. And though the mare was tired, we pushed southward, I behind the saddle. I had much to think about, wondering what was to become of me while my father went to skin Cameron. I had not the least doubt that he would do it. The world is a story-book to a lad of nine, and the thought of Charlestown filled me with a delight unspeakable. Perchance he would leave me in Charlestown.

At nightfall we came into a settlement called the Waxhaws. And there being no tavern there, and the mare being very jaded and the roads heavy, we cast about for a place to sleep. The sunlight slanting over the pine forest glistened on the pools in the wet fields. And it so chanced that splashing across these, swinging a milk-pail over his head, shouting at the top of his voice, was a red-headed lad of my own age. My father hailed him, and he came running towards us, still shouting, and vaulted the rails. He stood before us, eying me with a most mischievous look in his blue eyes, and dabbling in the red mud with his toes. I remember I thought him a queer-looking boy. He was lanky, and he had a very long face under his tousled hair.

My father asked him where he could spend the night.

"Wal," said the boy, "I reckon Uncle Crawford might take you in. And again he mightn't."

He ran ahead, still swinging the pail. And we, following, came at length to a comfortable-looking farmhouse. As we stopped at the doorway a stout, motherly woman filled it. She held her knitting in her hand.

"You Andy!" she cried," have you fetched the milk?"

Andy tried to look repentant.

"I declare I'll tan you," said the lady. "Git out this instant. What rascality have you been in?"

"I fetched home visitors, Ma," said Andy.

"Visitors!" cried the lady. "What 'll your Uncle Crawford say?" And she looked at us smiling, but with no great hostility.

"Pardon me, Madam," said my father, "if we seem to intrude. But my mare is tired, and we have nowhere to stay."

Uncle Crawford did take us in. He was a man of substance in that country, — a north of Ireland man by birth, if I remember right.

I went to bed with the red-headed boy, whose name was Andy Jackson. I remember that his mother came into our little room under the eaves and made Andy say his prayers, and me after him. But when she was gone out, Andy stumped his toe getting into bed in the dark and swore with a brilliancy and vehemence that astonished me.

It was some hours before we went to sleep, he plying me with questions about my life, which seemed to interest him greatly, and I returning in kind.

"My Pa's dead," said Andy. "He came from a part of Ireland where they are all weavers. We're kinder poor relations here. Aunt Crawford's sick, and Ma keeps house. But Uncle Crawford's good, an' lets me go to Charlotte Town with him sometimes."

I recall that he also boasted some about his big brothers, who were away just then.

Andy was up betimes in the morning, to see us start. But we didn't start, because Mr. Crawford insisted that the white mare should have a half day's rest. Andy, being hustled off unwillingly to the "Old Field" school, made me go with him. He was a very headstrong boy.

I was very anxious to see a school. This one was only a log house in a poor, piny place, with a rabble of boys and girls romping at the door. But when they saw us they stopped. Andy jumped into the air, let out a war-whoop, and flung himself into the midst, scattering them

right and left, and knocking one boy over and over. "I'm Billy Buck!" he cried. "I'm a hull regiment o' Rangers. Let th' Cherokees mind me!"

"Way for Sandy Andy!" cried the boys. "Where'd you get the new boy, Sandy?"

"His name's Davy," said Andy, "and his Pa's goin' to fight the Cherokees. He kin lick tarnation out'n any o' you."

Meanwhile I held back, never having been thrown with so many of my own kind.

"He's shot painters and b'ars," said Andy. "An' skinned 'em. Kin you lick him, Smally? I reckon not."

Now I had not come to the school for fighting. So I held back. Fortunately for me, Smally held back also. But he tried skilful tactics.

"He kin throw you, Sandy."

Andy faced me in an instant.

"Kin you?" said he.

There was nothing to do but try, and in a few seconds we were rolling on the ground, to the huge delight of Smally and the others, Andy shouting all the while and swearing. We rolled and rolled and rolled in the mud, until we both lost our breath, and even Andy stopped swearing, for want of it. After a while the boys were silent, and the thing became grim earnest. At length, by some accident rather than my own strength, both his shoulders touched the ground. I released him. But he was on his feet in an instant and at me again like a wild-cat.

"Andy won't stay throwed," shouted a boy. And before I knew it he had my shoulders down in a puddle. Then I went for him, and affairs were growing more serious than a wrestle, when Smally, fancying himself safe, and no doubt having a grudge, shouted out: —

"Tell him he slobbers, Davy."

Andy *did* slobber. But that was the end of me, and the beginning of Smally. Andy left me instantly, not without an intimation that he would come back, and proceeded to cover Smally with red clay and blood. However, in the

midst of this turmoil the schoolmaster arrived, haled both into the schoolhouse, held court, and flogged Andrew with considerable gusto. He pronounced these words afterwards, with great solemnity : —

" Andrew Jackson, if I catch ye fightin' once more, I'll be afther givin' ye lave to lave the school."

I parted from Andy at noon with real regret. He was the first boy with whom I had ever had any intimacy. And I admired him : chiefly, I fear, for his fluent use of profanity and his fighting qualities. He was a merry lad, with a wondrous quick temper but a good heart. And he seemed sorry to say good-by. He filled my pockets with June apples — unripe, by the way — and told me to remember him when I got *till* Charlestown.

I remembered him much longer than that, and usually with a shock of surprise.

CHAPTER III

CHARLESTOWN

Down and down we went, crossing great rivers by ford and ferry, until the hills flattened themselves and the country became a long stretch of level, broken by the forests only; and I saw many things I had not thought were on the earth. Once in a while I caught glimpses of great red houses, with stately pillars, among the trees. They put me in mind of the palaces in Bunyan, their windows all golden in the morning sun; and as we jogged ahead, I pondered on the delights within them. I saw gangs of negroes plodding to work along the road, an overseer riding behind them with his gun on his back; and there were whole cotton fields in these domains blazing in primrose flower, — a new plant here, so my father said. He was willing to talk on such subjects. But on others, and especially our errand to Charlestown, he would say nothing. And I knew better than to press him.

One day, as we were crossing a dike between rice swamps spread with delicate green, I saw the white tops of wagons flashing in the sun at the far end of it. We caught up with them, the wagoners cracking their whips and swearing at the straining horses. And lo! in front of the wagons was an army, — at least my boyish mind magnified it to such. Men clad in homespun, perspiring and spattered with mud, were straggling along the road by fours, laughing and joking together. The officers rode, and many of these had blue coats and buff waistcoats, — some the worse for wear. My father was pushing the white mare into the ditch to ride by, when one hailed him.

"Hullo, my man," said he, "are you a friend to Congress?"

"I'm off to Charlestown to leave the lad," said my father, "and then to fight the Cherokees."

"Good," said the other. And then, "Where are you from?"

"Upper Yadkin," answered my father. "And you?"

The officer, who was a young man, looked surprised. But then he laughed pleasantly.

"We're North Carolina troops, going to join Lee in Charlestown," said he. "The British are sending a fleet and regiments against it."

"Oh, aye," said my father, and would have passed on. But he was made to go before the Colonel, who plied him with many questions. Then he gave us a paper and dismissed us.

We pursued our journey through the heat that shimmered up from the road, pausing now and again in the shade of a wayside tree. At times I thought I could bear the sun no longer. But towards four o'clock of that day a great bank of yellow cloud rolled up, darkening the earth save for a queer saffron light that stained everything, and made our very faces yellow. And then a wind burst out of the east with a high mournful note, as from a great flute afar, filling the air with leaves and branches of trees. But it bore, too, a savor that was new to me, — a salt savor, deep and fresh, that I drew down into my lungs. And I knew that we were near the ocean. Then came the rain, in great billows, as though the ocean itself were upon us.

The next day we crossed a ferry on the Ashley River, and rode down the sand of Charlestown neck. And my most vivid remembrance is of the great trunks towering half a hundred feet in the air, with a tassel of leaves at the top, which my father said were palmettos. Something lay heavy on his mind. For I had grown to know his moods by a sort of silent understanding. And when the roofs and spires of the town shone over the foliage in the afternoon sun, I felt him give a great sigh that was like a sob.

And how shall I describe the splendor of that city? The sandy streets, and the gardens of flower and shade, heavy with the plant odors; and the great houses with their galleries and porticos set in the midst of the gardens, that I remember staring at wistfully. But before long we came to a barricade fixed across the street, and then to another. And presently, in an open space near a large building, was a company of soldiers at drill.

It did not strike me as strange then that my father asked his way of no man, but went to a little ordinary in a humbler part of the town. After a modest meal in a corner of the public room, we went out for a stroll. Then, from the wharves, I saw the bay dotted with islands, their white sand sparkling in the evening light, and fringed with strange trees, and beyond, of a deepening blue, the ocean. And nearer, — greatest of all delights to me, — riding on the swell was a fleet of ships. My father gazed at them long and silently, his palm over his eyes.

"Men-o'-war from the old country, lad," he said after a while. "They're a brave sight."

"And why are they here?" I asked.

"They've come to fight," said he, "and take the town again for the King."

It was twilight when we turned to go, and then I saw that many of the warehouses along the wharves were heaps of ruins. My father said this was that the town might be the better defended.

We bent our way towards one of the sandy streets where the great houses were. And to my surprise we turned in at a gate, and up a path leading to the high steps of one of these. Under the high portico the door was open, but the house within was dark. My father paused, and the hand he held to mine trembled. Then he stepped across the threshold, and raising the big polished knocker that hung on the panel, let it drop. The sound reverberated through the house, and then stillness. And then, from within, a shuffling sound, and an old negro came to the door. For an instant he stood staring through the dusk, and broke into a cry.

"Marse Alec!" he said.

"Is your master at home?" said my father.

Without another word he led us through a deep hall, and out into a gallery above the trees of a back garden, where a gentleman sat smoking a long pipe. The old negro stopped in front of him.

"Marse John," said he, his voice shaking, "heah's Marse Alec done come back."

The gentleman got to his feet with a start. His pipe fell to the floor, and the ashes scattered on the boards and lay glowing there.

"Alec!" he cried, peering into my father's face, "Alec! You're not dead."

"John," said my father, "can we talk here?"

"Good God!" said the gentleman, "you're just the same. To think of it — to think of it! Breed, a light in the drawing-room."

There was no word spoken while the negro was gone, and the time seemed very long. But at length he returned, a silver candlestick in each hand.

"Careful," cried the gentleman, petulantly, "you'll drop them."

He led the way into the house, and through the hall to a massive door of mahogany with a silver door-knob. The grandeur of the place awed me, and well it might. Boy-like, I was absorbed in this. Our little mountain cabin would almost have gone into this one room. The candles threw their flickering rays upward until they danced on the high ceiling. Marvel of marvels, in the oval left clear by the heavy, rounded cornice was a picture.

The negro set down the candles on the marble top of a table. But the air of the room was heavy and close, and the gentleman went to a window and flung it open. It came down instantly with a crash, so that the panes rattled again.

"Curse these Rebels," he shouted, "they've taken our window weights to make bullets."

Calling to the negro to pry open the window with a walking-stick, he threw himself into a big, upholstered

chair. 'Twas then I remarked the splendor of his clothes, which were silk. And he wore a waistcoat all sewed with flowers. With a boy's intuition, I began to dislike him intensely.

"Damn the Rebels!" he began. "They've driven his Lordship away. I hope his Majesty will hang every mother's son of 'em. All pleasure of life is gone, and they've folly enough to think they can resist the fleet. And the worst of it is," cried he, "the worst of it is, I'm forced to smirk to them, and give good gold to their government." Seeing that my father did not answer, he asked: "Have you joined the Highlanders? You were always for fighting."

"I'm to be at Cherokee Ford on the twentieth," said my father. "We're to scalp the redskins and Cameron, though 'tis not known."

"Cameron!" shrieked the gentleman. "But that's the other side, man! Against his Majesty?"

"One side or t'other," said my father, "'tis all one against Alec Cameron."

The gentleman looked at my father with something like terror in his eyes.

"You'll never forgive Cameron," he said.

"I'll no forgive anybody who does me a wrong," said my father.

"And where have you been all these years, Alec?" he asked presently. "Since you went off with —"

"I've been in the mountains, leading a pure life," said my father. "And we'll speak of nothing, if you please, that's gone by."

"And what will you have me do?" said the gentleman, helplessly.

"Little enough," said my father. "Keep the lad till I come again. He's quiet. He'll no trouble you greatly. Davy, this is Mr. Temple. You're to stay with him till I come again."

"Come here, lad," said the gentleman, and he peered into my face. "You'll not resemble your mother."

"He'll resemble no one," said my father, shortly.

"Good-by, Davy. Keep this till I come again." And he gave me the parcel made of my mother's gown. Then he lifted me in his strong arms and kissed me, and strode out of the house. We listened in silence as he went down the steps, and until his footsteps died away on the path. Then the gentleman rose and pulled a cord hastily. The negro came in.

"Put the lad to bed, Breed," said he.

"Whah, suh?"

"Oh, anywhere," said the master. He turned to me. "I'll be better able to talk to you in the morning, David," said he.

I followed the old servant up the great stairs, gulping down a sob that would rise, and clutching my mother's gown tight under my arm. Had my father left me alone in our cabin for a fortnight, I should not have minded. But here, in this strange house, amid such strange surroundings, I was heartbroken. The old negro was very kind. He led me into a little bedroom, and placing the candle on a polished dresser, he regarded me with sympathy.

"So you're Miss Lizbeth's boy," said he. "An' she dade. An' Marse Alec rough an' hard es though he been bo'n in de woods. Honey, ol' Breed 'll tek care ob you. I'll git you one o' dem night rails Marse Nick has, and some ob his'n close in de mawnin'."

These things I remember, and likewise sobbing myself to sleep in the four-poster. Often since I have wished that I had questioned Breed of many things on which I had no curiosity then, for he was my chief companion in the weeks that followed. He awoke me bright and early the next day.

"Heah's some close o' Marse Nick's you kin wear, honey," he said.

"Who is Master Nick?" I asked.

Breed slapped his thigh.

"Marse Nick Temple, Marsa's son. He's 'bout you size, but he ain' no mo' laik you den a jack rabbit's laik an' owl. Dey ain' none laik Marse Nick fo' gittin' into trouble — and gittin' out agin."

"Where is he now?" I asked.

"He at Temple Bow, on de Ashley Ribber. Dat's de Marsa's barony."

"His what?"

"De place whah he lib at, in de country."

"And why isn't the master there?"

I remember that Breed gave a wink, and led me out of the window on to a gallery above the one where we had found the master the night before. He pointed across the dense foliage of the garden to a strip of water gleaming in the morning sun beyond.

"See dat boat?" said the negro. "Sometime de Marse he tek ar ride in dat boat at night. Sometime gentlemen comes heah in a pow'ful hurry to git away, out'n de harbor whah de English is at."

By that time I was dressed, and marvellously uncomfortable in Master Nick's clothes. But as I was going out of the door, Breed hailed me.

"Marse Dave," — it was the first time I had been called that, — "Marse Dave, you ain't gwineter tell?"

"Tell what?" I asked.

"Bout'n de boat, and Marsa agwine away nights."

"No," said I, indignantly.

"I knowed you wahn't," said Breed. "You don' look as if you'd tell anything."

We found the master pacing the lower gallery. At first he barely glanced at me, and nodded. After a while he stopped, and began to put to me many questions about my life: when and how I had lived. And to some of my answers he exclaimed, "Good God!" That was all. He was a handsome man, with hands like a woman's, well set off by the lace at his sleeves. He had fine-cut features, and the white linen he wore was most becoming.

"David," said he, at length, and I noted that he lowered his voice, "David, you seem a discreet lad. Pay attention to what I tell you. And mark! if you disobey me, you will be well whipped. You have this house and garden to play in, but you are by no means to go out at the front of

the house. And whatever you may see or hear, you are to tell no one. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," I said.

"For the rest," said he, "Breed will give you food, and look out for your welfare."

And so he dismissed me. They were lonely days after that for a boy used to activity, and only the damp garden paths and lawns to run on. The creek at the back of the garden was stagnant and marshy when the water fell, and overhung by leafy boughs. On each side of the garden was a high brick wall. And though I was often tempted to climb it, I felt that disobedience was disloyalty to my father. Then there was the great house, dark and lonely in its magnificence, over which I roamed until I knew every corner of it.

I was most interested of all in the pictures of men and women in quaint, old-time costumes, and I used during the great heat of the day to sit in the drawing-room and study these, and wonder who they were and when they lived. Another amusement I had was to climb into the deep windows and peer through the blinds across the front garden into the street. Sometimes men stopped and talked loudly there, and again a rattle of drums would send me running to see the soldiers. I recall that I had a poor enough notion of what the fighting was all about. And no wonder. But I remember chiefly my insatiable longing to escape from this prison, as the great house soon became for me. And I yearned with a yearning I cannot express for our cabin in the hills and the old life there.

I caught glimpses of the master on occasions only, and then I avoided him; for I knew he had no wish to see me. Sometimes he would be seated in the gallery, tapping his foot on the floor, and sometimes pacing the garden walks with his hands opening and shutting. And one night I awoke with a start, and lay for a while listening until I heard something like a splash, and the scraping of the bottom-boards of a boat. Irresistibly I jumped out of bed, and running to the gallery rail I saw two dark figures moving among the leaves below. The next morn-

ing I came suddenly on a strange gentleman in the gallery. He wore a flowered dressing-gown like the one I had seen on the master, and he had a jolly, round face. I stopped and stared.

"Who the devil are you?" said he, but not unkindly.

"My name is David Trimble," said I, "and I come from the mountains."

He laughed.

"Mr. David Trimble-from-the-mountains, who the devil am I?"

"I don't know, sir," and I started to go away, not wishing to disturb him.

"Avast!" he cried. "Stand fast. See that you remember that."

"I'm not here of my free will, sir, but because my father wishes it. And I'll betray nothing."

Then he stared at me.

"How old did you say you were?" he demanded.

"I didn't say," said I.

"And you are of Scotch descent?' said he.

"I didn't say so, sir."

"You're a rum one," said he, laughing again, and he disappeared into the house.

That day, when Breed brought me my dinner on my gallery, he did not speak of a visitor. You may be sure I did not mention the circumstance. But Breed always told me the outside news.

"Dey's gittin' ready fo' a big fight, Marse Dave," said he. "Mister Moultrie in the fo't in de bay, an' Marse Gen'l Lee tryin' for to boss him. Dey's Rebels. An' Marse Admiral Parker an' de King's reg'ments fixin' fo' to tek de fo't, an' den Charlesto'n. Dey say Mister Moultrie ain't got no mo' chance dan a treed 'possum."

"Why, Breed?" I asked. I had heard my father talk of England's power and might, and Mister Moultrie seemed to me a very brave man in his little fort.

"Why!" exclaimed the old negro. "You ain't neber read no hist'ry books. I knows some of de gentlemen

wid Mister Moultrie. Dey ain't no soldiers. Some is fine gentlemen, to be suah, but it's jist foolishness to fight dat fleet an' army. Marse Gen'l Lee hisself, he done sesso. I heerd him."

"And he's on Mister Moultrie's side?" I asked.

"Sholy," said Breed. "He's de Rebel gen'l."

"Then he's a knave and a coward!" I cried with a boy's indignation. "Where did you hear him say that?" I demanded, incredulous of some of Breed's talk.

"Right heah in dis house," he answered, and quickly clapped his hand to his mouth, and showed the whites of his eyes. "You ain't agwineter tell dat, Marse Dave?"

"Of course not," said I. And then: "I wish I could see Mister Moultrie in his fort, and the fleet."

"Why, honey, so you kin," said Breed.

The good-natured negro dropped his work and led the way upstairs, I following expectant, to the attic. A rickety ladder rose to a kind of tower (cupola, I suppose it would be called), whence the bay spread out before me like a picture, the white islands edged with the whiter lacing of the waves. There, indeed, was the fleet, but far away, like toy ships on the water, and the bit of a fort perched on the sandy edge of an island. I spent most of that day there, watching anxiously for some movement. But none came.

That night I was again awakened. And running into the gallery, I heard quick footsteps in the garden. Then there was a lantern's flash, a smothered oath, and all was dark again. But in the flash I had seen distinctly three figures. One was Breed, and he held the lantern; another was the master; and the third, a stout one muffled in a cloak, I made no doubt was my jolly friend. I lay long awake, with a boy's curiosity, until presently the dawn broke, and I arose and dressed, and began to wander about the house. No Breed was sweeping the gallery, nor was there any sign of the master. The house was as still as a tomb, and the echoes of my footsteps rolled through the halls and chambers. At last, prompted by curiosity and fear, I sought the kitchen, where I had often sat with

Breed as he cooked the master's dinner. This was at the bottom and end of the house. The great fire there was cold, and the pots and pans hung neatly on their hooks, untouched that day. I was running through the wet garden, glad to be out in the light, when a sound stopped me.

It was a dull roar from the direction of the bay. Almost instantly came another, and another, and then several broke together. And I knew that the battle had begun. Forgetting for the moment my loneliness, I ran into the house and up the stairs two at a time, and up the ladder into the cupola, where I flung open the casement and leaned out.

There was the battle indeed, — a sight so vivid to me after all these years that I can call it again before me when I will. The toy men-o'-war, with sails set, ranging in front of the fort. They looked at my distance to be pressed against it. White puffs, like cotton balls, would dart one after another from a ship's side, melt into a cloud, float over her spars, and hide her from my view. And then presently the roar would reach me, and answering puffs along the line of the fort. And I could see the mortar shells go up and up, leaving a scorched trail behind, curve in a great circle, and fall upon the little garrison. Mister Moultrie became a real person to me then, a vivid picture in my boyish mind — a hero beyond all other heroes.

As the sun got up in the heavens and the wind fell, the cupola became a bake-oven. But I scarcely felt the heat. My whole soul was out in the bay, pent up with the men in the fort. How long could they hold out? Why were they not all killed by the shot that fell like hail among them? Yet puff after puff sprang from their guns, and the sound of it was like a storm coming nearer in the heat. But at noon it seemed to me as though some of the ships were sailing. It was true. Slowly they drew away from the others, and presently I thought they had stopped again. Surely two of them were stuck together, then three were fast on a shoal. Boats, like black bugs in the water, came and went between them and the others. After a long time

the two that were together got apart and away. But the third stayed there, immovable, helpless.

Throughout the afternoon the fight kept on, the little black boats coming and going. I saw a mast totter and fall on one of the ships. I saw the flag shot away from the fort, and reappear again. But now the puffs came from her walls slowly and more slowly, so that my heart sank with the setting sun. And presently it grew too dark to see aught save the red flashes. Slowly, reluctantly, the noise died down until at last a great silence reigned, broken only now and again by voices in the streets below me. It was not until then that I realized that I had been all day without food — that I was alone in the dark of a great house.

I had never known fear in the woods at night. But now I trembled as I felt my way down the ladder, and groped and stumbled through the black attic for the stairs. Every noise I made seemed louder an hundred fold than the battle had been, and when I barked my shins, the pain was sharper than a knife. Below, on the big stairway, the echo of my footsteps sounded again from the empty rooms, so that I was taken with a panic and fled downward, sliding and falling, until I reached the hall. Frantically as I tried, I could not unfasten the bolts on the front door. And so, running into the drawing-room, I pried open the window, and sat me down in the embrasure to think, and to try to quiet the thumpings of my heart.

By degrees I succeeded. The still air of the night and the heavy, damp odors of the foliage helped me. And I tried to think what was right for me to do. I had promised the master not to leave the place, and that promise seemed in pledge to my father. Surely the master would come back — or Breed. They would not leave me here alone without food much longer. Although I was young, I was brought up to responsibility. And I inherited a conscience that has since given me much trouble.

From these thoughts, trying enough for a starved lad, I fell to thinking of my father on the frontier fighting the Cherokees. And so I dozed away to dream of him.

I remember that he was skinning Cameron, — I had often pictured it, — and Cameron yelling, when I was awakened with a shock by a great noise.

I listened with my heart in my throat. The noise seemed to come from the hall, — a prodigious pounding. Presently it stopped, and a man's voice cried out: —

"Ho there, within!"

My first impulse was to answer. But fear kept me still.

"Batter down the door," some one shouted.

There was a sound of shuffling in the portico, and the same voice: —

"Now then, all together, lads!"

Then came a straining and splitting of wood, and with a crash the door gave way. A lantern's rays shot through the hall.

"The house is as dark as a tomb," said a voice.

"And as empty, I reckon," said another. "John Temple and his spy have got away."

"We'll have a search," answered the first voice.

They stood for a moment in the drawing-room door, peering, and then they entered. There were five of them. Two looked to be gentlemen, and three were of rougher appearance. They carried lanterns.

"That window's open," said one of the gentlemen. "They must have been here to-day. Hello, what's this?" He started back in surprise.

I slid down from the window-seat, and stood facing them, not knowing what else to do. They, too, seemed equally confounded.

"It must be Temple's son," said one, at last. "I had thought the family at Temple Bow. What's your name, my lad?"

"David Trimble, sir," said I.

"And what are you doing here?" he asked more sternly.

"I was left in Mr. Temple's care by my father."

"Oho!" he cried. "And where is your father?"

"He's gone to fight the Cherokees," I answered soberly. "To skin a man named Cameron."

At that they were silent for an instant, and then the two broke into a laugh.

"Egad, Lowndes," said the gentleman, "here is a fine mystery. Do you think the boy is lying?"

The other gentleman scratched his forehead.

"I'll have you know I don't lie, sir," I said, ready to cry.

"No," said the other gentleman. "A backwoodsman named Trimble went to Rutledge with credentials from North Carolina, and has gone off to Cherokee Ford to join McCall."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the first gentleman. He came up and laid his hand on my shoulder, and said: —

"Where is Mr. Temple?"

"That I don't know, sir."

"When did he go away?"

I did not answer at once.

"That I can't tell you, sir."

"Was there any one with him?"

"That I can't tell you, sir."

"The devil you can't!" he cried, taking his hand away. "And why not?"

I shook my head, sorely beset.

"Come, Mathews," cried the gentleman called Lowndes. "We'll search first, and attend to the lad after."

And so they began going through the house, prying into every cupboard and sweeping under every bed. They even climbed to the attic; and noting the open casement in the cupola, Mr. Lowndes said: —

"Some one has been here to-day."

"It was I, sir," I said. "I have been here all day."

"And what doing, pray?" he demanded.

"Watching the battle. And oh, sir," I cried, "can you tell me whether Mister Moultrie beat the British?"

"He did so," cried Mr. Lowndes. "He did, and soundly."

He stared at me. I must have looked my pleasure.

"Why, David," says he, "you are a patriot, too."

"I am a Rebel, sir," I cried hotly.

Both gentlemen laughed again, and the men with them.

"The lad is a character," said Mr. Lowndes.

We made our way down into the garden, which they searched last. At the creek's side the boat was gone, and there were footsteps in the mud.

"The bird has flown, Lowndes," said Mr. Mathews.

"And good riddance for the Committee," answered that gentleman, heartily. "He got to the fleet in fine season to get a round shot in the middle. David," said he, solemnly, "remember it never pays to try to be two things at once."

"I'll warrant he stayed below water," said Mr. Mathews. "But what shall we do with the lad?"

"I'll take him to my house for the night," said Mr. Lowndes, "and in the morning we'll talk to him. I reckon he should be sent to Temple Bow. He is connected in some way with the Temples."

"God help him if he goes there," said Mr. Mathews, under his breath. But I heard him.

They locked up the house, and left one of the men to guard it, while I went with Mr. Lowndes to his residence. I remember that people were gathered in the streets as we passed, making merry, and that they greeted Mr. Lowndes with respect and good cheer. His house, too, was set in a garden and quite as fine as Mr. Temple's. It was ablaze with candles, and I caught glimpses of fine gentlemen and ladies in the rooms. But he hurried me through the hall, and into a little chamber at the rear where a writing-desk was set. He turned and faced me.

"You must be tired, David," he said.

I nodded.

"And hungry? Boys are always hungry."

"Yes, sir."

"You had no dinner?"

"No, sir," I answered, off my guard.

"Mercy!" he said. "It is a long time since breakfast."

"I had no breakfast, sir."

"Good God!" he said, and pulled the velvet handle of a cord. A negro came.

"Is the supper for the guests ready?"

"Yes, Marsa."

"Then bring as much as you can carry here," said the gentleman. "And ask Mrs. Lowndes if I may speak with her."

Mrs. Lowndes came first. And such a fine lady she was that she frightened me, this being my first experience with ladies. But when Mr. Lowndes told her my story, she ran to me impulsively and put her arms about me.

"Poor lad!" she said. "What a shame!"

I think that the tears came then, but it was small wonder. There were tears in her eyes, too.

Such a supper as I had I shall never forget. And she sat beside me for long, neglecting her guests, and talking of my life. Suddenly she turned to her husband, calling him by name.

"He is Alec Ritchie's son," she said, "and Alec has gone against Cameron."

Mr. Lowndes did not answer, but nodded.

"And must he go to Temple Bow?"

"My dear," said Mr. Lowndes, "I fear it is our duty to send him there."

CHAPTER IV

TEMPLE BOW

In the morning I started for Temple Bow on horseback behind one of Mr. Lowndes' negroes. Good Mrs. Lowndes had kissed me at parting, and tucked into my pocket a parcel of sweetmeats. There had been a few grave gentlemen to see me, and to their questions I had replied what I could. But tell them of Mr. Temple I would not, save that he himself had told me nothing. And Mr. Lowndes had presently put an end to their talk.

"The lad knows nothing, gentlemen," he had said, which was true.

"David," said he, when he bade me farewell, "I see that your father has brought you up to fear God. Remember that all you see in this life is not to be imitated."

And so I went off behind his negro. He was a merry lad, and despite the great heat of the journey and my misgivings about Temple Bow, he made me laugh. I was sad at crossing the ferry over the Ashley, through thinking of my father, but I reflected that it could not be long now ere I saw him again. In the middle of the day we stopped at a tavern. And at length, in the abundant shade of evening, we came to a pair of great ornamental gates set between brick pillars capped with white balls, and turned into a drive. And presently, winding through the trees, we were in sight of a long, brick mansion trimmed with white, and a velvet lawn before it all flecked with shadows. In front of the portico was a saddled horse, craning his long neck at two panting hounds stretched on the ground. A negro boy in blue clutched

the bridle. On the horse-block a gentleman in white reclined. He wore shiny boots, and he held his hat in his hand, and he was gazing up at a lady who stood on the steps above him.

The lady I remember as well — Lord forbid that I should forget her. And her laugh as I heard it that evening is ringing now in my ears. And yet it was not a laugh. Musical it was, yet there seemed no pleasure in it: rather irony, and a great weariness of the amusements of this world: and a note, too, from a vanity never ruffled. It stopped abruptly as the negro pulled up his horse before her, and she stared at us haughtily.

"What's this?" she said.

"Pardon, Mistis," said the negro, "I'se got a letter from Marse Lowndes."

"Mr. Lowndes should instruct his niggers," she said. "There is a servants' drive." The man was turning his horse when she cried: "Hold! Let's have it."

He dismounted and gave her the letter, and I jumped to the ground, watching her as she broke the seal, taking her in, as a boy will, from the flowing skirt and tight-laced stays of her salmon silk to her high and powdered hair. She must have been about thirty. Her face was beautiful, but had no particle of expression in it, and was dotted here and there with little black patches of plaster. While she was reading, a sober gentleman in black silk breeches and severe coat came out of the house and stood beside her.

"Heigho, parson," said the gentleman on the horse-block, without moving, "are you to preach against loo or lansquenet to-morrow?"

"Would it make any difference to you, Mr. Riddle?"

Before he could answer there came a great clatter behind them, and a boy of my own age appeared. With a leap he landed sprawling on the indolent gentleman's shoulders, nearly upsetting him.

"You young rascal!" exclaimed the gentleman, pitching him on the drive almost at my feet; then he fell back again to a position where he could look up at the lady.

"Harry Riddle," cried the boy, "I'll ride steeplechases and beat you some day."

"Hush, Nick," cried the lady, petulantly, "I'll have no nerves left me." She turned to the letter again, holding it very near to her eyes, and made a wry face of impatience. Then she held the sheet out to Mr. Riddle.

"A pretty piece of news," she said languidly. "Read it, Harry."

The gentleman seized her hand instead. The lady glanced at the clergyman, whose back was turned, and shook her head.

"How tiresome you are!" she said.

"What's happened?" asked Mr. Riddle, letting go as the parson looked around.

"Oh, they've had a battle," said the lady, "and Moultrie and his Rebels have beat off the King's fleet."

"The devil they have!" exclaimed Mr. Riddle, while the parson started forwards. "Anything more?"

"Yes, a little." She hesitated. "That husband of mine has fled Charlestown. They think he went to the fleet." And she shot a meaning look at Mr. Riddle, who in turn flushed red. I was watching them.

"What!" cried the clergyman, "John Temple has run away?"

"Why not," said Mr. Riddle. "One can't live between wind and water long. And Charlestown's — uncomfortable in summer."

At that the clergyman cast one look at them — such a look as I shall never forget — and went into the house.

"Mamma," said the boy, "where has father gone? Has he run away?"

"Yes. Don't bother me, Nick."

"I don't believe it," cried Nick, his high voice shaking. "I'd — I'd disown him."

At that Mr. Riddle burst into a hearty laugh.

"Come, Nick," said he, "it isn't so bad as that. Your father's for his Majesty, like the rest of us. He's merely gone over to fight for him." And he looked at the lady and laughed again. But I liked the boy.

As for the lady, she curled her lip. "Mr. Riddle, don't be foolish," she said. "If we are to play, send your horse to the stables." Suddenly her eye lighted on me. "One more brat," she sighed. "Nick, take him to the nursery, or the stable. And both of you keep out of my sight."

Nick strode up to me.

"Don't mind her. She's always saying, 'Keep out of my sight.'" His voice trembled. He took me by the sleeve and began pulling me around the house and into a little summer bower that stood there; for he had a masterful manner.

"What's your name?" he demanded.

"David Trimble," I said.

"Have you seen my father in town?"

The intense earnestness of the question surprised an answer out of me.

"Yes."

"Where?" he demanded.

"In his house. My father left me with your father."

"Tell me about it."

I related as much as I dared, leaving out Mr. Temple's double dealing; which, in truth, I did not understand. But the boy was relentless.

"Why," said he, "my father was a friend of Mr. Lowndes and Mr. Mathews. I have seen them here drinking with him. And in town. And he ran away?"

"I do not know where he went," said I, which was the truth.

He said nothing, but hid his face in his arms over the rail of the bower. At length he looked up at me fiercely.

"If you ever tell this, I will kill you," he cried. "Do you hear?"

That made me angry.

"Yes, I hear," I said. "But I am not afraid of you."

He was at me in an instant, knocking me to the floor, so that the breath went out of me, and was pounding me vigorously ere I recovered from the shock and astonishment of it and began to defend myself. He was taller than I, and wiry, but not so rugged. Yet there was a

look about him that was far beyond his strength. A look that meant, *never say die.* Curiously, even as I fought desperately I compared him with that other lad I had known, Andy Jackson. And this one, though not so powerful, frightened me the more in his relentlessness.

Perhaps we should have been fighting still had not some one pulled us apart, and when my vision cleared I saw Nick, struggling and kicking, held tightly in the hands of the clergyman. And it was all that gentleman could do to hold him. I am sure it was quite five minutes before he forced the lad, exhausted, on to the seat. And then there was a defiance about his nostrils that showed he was undefeated. The clergyman, still holding him with one hand, took out his handkerchief with the other and wiped his brow.

I expected a scolding and a sermon. To my amazement the clergyman said quietly :—

"Now what was the trouble, David?"

"I'll not be the one to tell it, sir," I said, and trembled at my temerity.

The parson looked at me queerly.

"Then you are in the right of it," he said. "It is as I thought; I'll not expect Nicholas to tell me."

"I will tell you, sir," said Nicholas. "He was in the house with my father when—when he ran away. And I said that if he ever spoke of it to any one, I would kill him."

For a while the clergyman was silent, gazing with a strange tenderness at the lad, whose face was averted.

"And you, David?" he said presently.

"I—I never mean to tell, sir. But I was not to be frightened."

"Quite right, my lad," said the clergyman, so kindly that it sent a strange thrill through me. Nicholas looked up quickly.

"You won't tell?" he said.

"No," I said.

"You can let me go now, Mr. Mason," said he. Mr. Mason did. And he came over and sat beside me, but said nothing more.

After a while Mr. Mason cleared his throat.

"Nicholas," said he, "when you grow older you will understand these matters better. Your father went away to join the side he believes in, the side we all believe in — the King's side."

"Did he ever pretend to like the other side?" asked Nick, quickly.

"When you grow older you will know his motives," answered the clergyman, gently. "Until then, you must trust him."

"You never pretended," cried Nick.

"Thank God I never was forced to do so," said the clergyman, fervently.

It is wonderful that the conditions of our existence may wholly change without a seeming strangeness. After many years only vivid snatches of what I saw and heard and did at Temple Bow come back to me. I understood but little the meaning of the seigniorial life there. My chief wonder now is that its golden surface was not more troubled by the winds then brewing. It was a new life to me, one that I had not dreamed of.

After that first falling out, Nick and I became inseparable. Far slower than he in my likes and dislikes, he soon became a passion with me. Even as a boy, he did everything with a grace unsurpassed ; the dash and daring of his pranks took one's breath; his generosity to those he loved was prodigal. Nor did he ever miss a chance to score those under his displeasure. At times he was reckless beyond words to describe, and again he would fall sober for a day. He could be cruel and tender in the same hour ; abandoned and freezing in his dignity. He had an old negro mammy whose worship for him and his possessions was idolatry. I can hear her now calling and calling, "Marse Nick, honey, yo' supper's done got cole," as she searched patiently among the magnolias. And suddenly there would be a shout, and Mammy's turban go flying from her woolly head, or Mammy herself would be dragged down from behind and sat upon.

We had our supper, Nick and I, at twilight, in the children's dining room. A little white room, unevenly

panelled, the silver candlesticks and yellow flames fantastically reflected in the mirrors between the deep windows, and the moths and June-bugs tilting at the lights. We sat at a little mahogany table eating porridge and cream from round blue bowls, with Mammy to wait on us. Sometimes there floated in upon us the hum of revelry from the great drawing-room where Madame had her company. Often the good Mr. Mason would come in to us (he cared little for the parties), and talk to us of our day's doings. Nick had his lessons from the clergyman in the winter time.

Mr. Mason took occasion once to question me on what I knew. Some of my answers, in especial those relating to my knowledge of the Bible, surprised him. Others made him sad.

"David," said he, "you are an earnest lad, with a head to learn, and you will. When your father comes, I shall talk with him." He paused — "I knew him," said he, "I knew him ere you were born. A just man, and upright, but with a great sorrow. We must never be hasty in our judgments. But you will never be hasty, David," he added, smiling at me. "You are a good companion for Nicholas."

Nicholas and I slept in the same bedroom, at a corner of the long house, and far removed from his mother. She would not be disturbed by the noise he made in the mornings. I remember that he had cut in the solid shutters of that room, folded into the embrasures, "*Nicholas Temple, His Mark*," and a long, flat sword. The first night in that room we slept but little, near the whole of it being occupied with tales of my adventures and of my life in the mountains. Over and over again I must tell him of the "painters" and wildcats, of deer and bear and wolf. Nor was he ever satisfied. And at length I came to speak of that land where I had often lived in fancy — the land beyond the mountains of which Daniel Boone had told. Of its forest and glade, its countless herds of elk and buffalo, its salt-licks and Indians, until we fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.

"I will go there," he cried in the morning, as he hurried into his clothes; "I will go to that land as sure as my name is Nick Temple. And you shall go with me, David."

"Perchance I shall go before you," I answered, though I had small hopes of persuading my father.

He would often make his exit by the window, climbing down into the garden by the protruding bricks at the corner of the house; or sometimes go shouting down the long halls and through the gallery to the great stairway, a smothered oath from behind the closed bedroom doors proclaiming that he had waked a guest. And many days we spent in the wood, playing at hunting game — a poor enough amusement for me, and one that Nick soon tired of. They were thick, wet woods, unlike our woods of the mountains; and more than once we had excitement enough with the snakes that lay there.

I believe that in a week's time Nick was as conversant with my life as I myself. For he made me tell of it again and again, and of Kentucky. And always as he listened his eyes would glow and his breast heave with excitement.

"Do you think your father will take you there, David, when he comes for you?"

I hoped so, but was doubtful.

"I'll run away with you," he declared. "There is no one here who cares for me save Mr. Mason and Mammy."

And I believe he meant it. He saw but little of his mother, and nearly always something unpleasant was coupled with his views. Sometimes we ran across her in the garden paths walking with a gallant, — oftenest Mr. Riddle. It was a beautiful garden, with hedge-bordered walks and flowers wondrously massed in color, a high brick wall surrounding it. Frequently Mrs. Temple and Mr. Riddle would play at cards there of an afternoon, and when that musical, unbelieving laugh of hers came floating over the wall, Nick would say: —

"Mamma is winning."

Once we heard high words between the two, and run-

ning into the garden found the cards scattered on the grass, and the couple gone.

Of all Nick's escapades, — and he was continually in and out of them, — I recall only a few of the more serious. As I have said, he was a wild lad, sobered by none of the things which had gone to make my life, and what he took into his head to do he generally did, — or, if balked, flew into such a rage as to make one believe he could not live. Life was always war with him, or some semblance of a struggle. Of his many wild doings I recall well the time when — fired by my tales of hunting — he went out to attack the young bull in the paddock with a bow and arrow. It made small difference to the bull that the arrow was too blunt to enter his hide. With a bellow that frightened the idle negroes at the slave quarters, he started for Master Nick. I, who had been taught by my father never to run any unnecessary risk, had taken the precaution to provide as large a stone as I could comfortably throw, and took station on the fence. As the furious animal came charging, with his head lowered, I struck him by a good fortune between the eyes, and Nicholas got over. We were standing on the far side, watching him pawing the broken bow, when, in the crowd of frightened negroes, we discovered the parson beside us.

"David," said he, patting me with a shaking hand, "I perceive that you have a cool head. Our young friend here has a hot one. Dr. Johnson may not care for Scotch blood, and yet I think a wee bit of it is not to be despised."

I wondered whether Dr. Johnson was staying in the house, too.

How many slaves there were at Temple Bow I know not, but we used to see them coming home at night in droves, the overseers riding beside them with whips and guns. One day a huge Congo chief, not long from Africa, nearly killed an overseer, and escaped to the swamp. As the day fell, we heard the baying of the bloodhounds hot upon his trail. More ominous still, a sound like a rising wind came from the direction of the quarters. Into our

little dining-room burst Mrs. Temple herself, slamming the door behind her. Mr. Mason, who was sitting with us, rose to calm her.

"The Rebels!" she cried. "The Rebels have taught them this, with their accursed notions of liberty and equality. We shall all be murdered by the blacks because of the Rebels. Oh, hell-fire is too good for them. Have the house barred and a watch set to-night. What shall we do?"

"I pray you compose yourself, Madame," said the clergyman. "We can send for the militia."

"The militia!" she shrieked; "the Rebel militia! They would murder us as soon as the niggers."

"They are respectable men," answered Mr. Mason, "and were at Fanning Hall to-day patrolling."

"I would rather be killed by whites than blacks," said the lady. "But who is to go for the militia?"

"I will ride for them," said Mr. Mason. It was a dark, lowering night, and spitting rain.

"And leave me defenceless!" she cried. "You do not stir, sir."

"It is a pity," said Mr. Mason — he was goaded to it, I suppose — "'tis a pity Mr. Riddle did not come to-night."

She shot at him a withering look, for even in her fear she would brook no liberties. Nick spoke up: —

"I will go," said he; "I can get through the woods to Fanning Hall —"

"And I will go with him," I said.

"Let the brats go," she said, and cut short Mr. Mason's expostulations. She drew Nick to her and kissed him. He wriggled away, and without more ado we climbed out of the dining-room windows into the night. Running across the lawn, we left the lights of the great house twinkling behind us in the rain. We had to pass the long line of cabins at the quarters. Three overseers with lanterns stood guard there; the cabins were dark, the wretches within silent and cowed. Thence we felt with our feet for the path across the fields, stumbled over a sty, and took our way through the black woods. I was at

home here, and Nick was not to be frightened. At intervals the mournful bay of a bloodhound came to us from a distance.

"Suppose we should meet the Congo chief," said Nick, suddenly.

The idea had occurred to me.

"She needn't have been so frightened," said he, in scornful remembrance of his mother's actions.

We pressed on. Nick knew the path as only a boy can. Half an hour passed. It grew brighter. The rain ceased, and a new moon shot out between the leaves. I seized his arm.

"What's that?" I whispered.

"A deer."

But I, cradled in woodcraft, had heard plainly a man creeping through the underbrush beside us. Fear of the Congo chief and pity for the wretch tore at my heart. Suddenly there loomed in front of us, on the path, a great, naked man. We stood with useless limbs, staring at him.

Then, from the trees over our heads, came a chittering and a chattering such as I had never heard. The big man before us dropped to the earth, his head bowed, muttering. As for me, my fright increased. The chattering stopped, and Nick stepped forward and laid his hand on the negro's bare shoulder.

"We needn't be afraid of him now, Davy," he said. "I learned that trick from a Portuguese overseer we had last year."

"You did it!" I exclaimed, my astonishment overcoming my fear.

"It's the way the monkeys chatter in the Canaries," he said. "Manuel had a tame one, and I heard it talk. Once before I tried it on the chief, and he fell down. He thinks I'm a god."

It must have been a weird scene to see the great negro following two boys in the moonlight. Indeed, he came after us like a dog. At length we were in sight of the lights of Fanning Hall. The militia was there. We were challenged by the guard, and caused sufficient amazement

when we appeared in the hall before the master, who was a bachelor of fifty.

"'Sblood, Nick Temple!" he cried, "what are you doing here with that big Congo for a dog? The sight of him frightens me."

The negro, indeed, was a sight to frighten one. The black mud of the swamps was caked on him, and his flesh was torn by brambles.

"He ran away," said Nick; "and I am taking him home."

"You — you are taking him home!" sputtered Mr. Fanning.

"Do you want to see him act?" said Nick. And without waiting for a reply he filled the hall with a dozen monkeys. Mr. Fanning leaped back into a doorway, but the chief prostrated himself on the floor. "Now do you believe I can take him home?" said Nick.

"'Swounds!" said Mr. Fanning, when he had his breath. "You beat the devil, Nicholas Temple. The next time you come to call I pray you leave your travelling show at home."

"Mamma sent me for the militia," said Nick.

"She did!" said Mr. Fanning, looking grim. "An insurrection is a bad thing, but there was no danger for two lads in the woods, I suppose."

"There's no danger anyway," said Nick. "The niggers are all scared to death."

Mr. Fanning burst out into a loud laugh, stopped suddenly, sat down, and took Nick on his knee. It was an incongruous scene. Mr. Fanning almost cried.

"Bless your soul," he said, "but you are a lad. Would to God I had you instead of —"

He paused abruptly.

"I must go home," said Nick; "she will be worried."

"*She* will be worried!" cried Mr. Fanning, in a burst of anger. Then he said: "You shall have the militia. You shall have the militia." He rang a bell and sent his steward for the captain, a gawky country farmer, who gave a gasp when he came upon the scene in the hall.

"And mind," said Nick to the captain, "you are to keep your men away from him, or he will kill one of them."

The captain grinned at him curiously.

"I reckon I won't have to tell them to keep away," said he.

Mr. Fanning started us off for the walk with pockets filled with sweetmeats, which we nibbled on the way back. We made a queer procession, Nick and I striding ahead to show the path, followed by the now servile chief, and after him the captain and his twenty men in single file. It was midnight when we saw the lights of Temple Bow through the trees. One of the tired overseers met us near the kitchen. When he perceived the Congo his face lighted up with rage, and he instinctively reached for his whip. But the chief stood before him, immovable, with arms folded, and a look on his face that meant danger.

"He will kill you, Emory," said Nick; "he will kill you if you touch him."

Emory dropped his hand, limply.

"He will go to work in the morning," said Nick; "but mind you, not a lash."

"Very good, Master Nick," said the man; "but who's to get him in his cabin?"

"I will," said Nick. He beckoned to the Congo, who followed him over to quarters and went in at his door without a protest.

The next morning Mrs. Temple looked out of her window and saw the militiamen on the lawn.

"Pooh!" she said, "are those butternuts the soldiers that Nick went to fetch?"

CHAPTER V

CRAM'S HELL

AFTER that my admiration for Nick Temple increased greatly, whether excited by his courage and presence of mind, or his ability to imitate men and women and creatures, I know not. One of our amusements, I recall, was to go to the Congo's cabin to see him fall on his face, until Mr. Mason put a stop to it. The clergyman let us know that we were encouraging idolatry, and he himself took the chief in hand.

Another incident comes to me from those bygone days. The fear of negro insurrections at the neighboring plantations being temporarily lulled, the gentry began to pluck up courage for their usual amusements. There were to be races at some place a distance away, and Nick was determined to go. Had he not determined that I should go, all would have been well. The evening before he came upon his mother in the garden. Strange to say, she was in a gracious mood and alone.

"Come and kiss me, Nick," she said. "Now, what do you want?"

"I want to go to the races," he said.

"You have your pony. You can follow the coach."

"David is to ride the pony," said Nick, generously. "May I go in the coach?"

"No," she said, "there is no room for you."

Nicholas flared up. "Harry Riddle is going in the coach. I don't see why you can't take me sometimes. You like him better than me."

The lady flushed very red.

"How dare you, Nick!" she cried angrily. "What has Mr. Mason been putting into your head?"

"Nothing," said Nick, quite as angrily. "Any one can see that you like Harry. And I *will* ride in the coach."

"You'll not," said his mother.

I had heard nothing of this. The next morning he led out his pony from the stables for me to ride, and insisted. And, supposing he was to go in the coach, I put foot in the stirrup. The little beast would scarce stand still for me to mount.

"You'll not need the whip with her," said Nick, and led her around by the side of the house, in view of the portico, and stood there at her bridle. Presently, with a great noise and clatter of hoofs, the coach rounded the drive, the powdered negro coachman pulling up the four horses with much ceremony at the door. It was a wondrous great vehicle, the bright colors of its body flashing in the morning light. I had examined it more than once, and with awe, in the coach-house. It had glass windows and a lion on a blue shield on the door, and within it was all salmon silk, save the painted design on the ceiling. Great leather straps held up this house on wheels, to take the jolts of the road. And behind it was a platform. That morning two young negroes with flowing blue coats stood on it. They leaped to the ground when the coach stopped, and stood each side of the door, waiting for my lady to enter.

She came down the steps, laughing, with Mr. Riddle, who was in his riding clothes, for he was to race that day. He handed her in, and got in after her. The coachman cracked his whip, the coach creaked off down the drive, I in the trees one side waiting for them to pass, and wondering what Nick was to do. He had let go my bridle, folded his whip in his hand, and with a shout of "Come on, Davy," he ran for the coach, which was going slowly, caught hold of the footman's platform, and pulled himself up.

What possessed the footman I know not. Perchance fear of his mistress was greater than fear of his young

master ; but he took the lad by the shoulders — gently, to be sure — and pushed him into the road, where he fell and rolled over. I guessed what would happen. Picking himself up, Nick was at the man like a hurricane, seizing him swiftly by the leg. The negro fell upon the platform, clutching wildly, where he lay in a sheer fright, shrieking for mercy, his cries rivalled by those of the lady within. The coachman frantically pulled his horses to a stand, the other footman jumped off, and Mr. Harry Riddle came flying out of the coach door, to behold Nicholas beating the negro with his riding-whip.

"You young devil," cried Mr. Riddle, angrily, striding forward, "what are you doing?"

"Keep off, Harry," said Nicholas. "I am teaching this nigger that he is not to lay hands on his betters." With that he gave the boy one more cut, and turned from him contemptuously.

"What is it, Harry?" came in a shrill voice from within the coach.

"It's Nick's pranks," said Mr. Riddle, grinning in spite of his anger; "he's ruined one of your footmen. You little scoundrel," cried Mr. Riddle, advancing again, "you've frightened your mother nearly to a swoon."

"Serves her right," said Nick.

"What!" cried Mr. Riddle. "Come down from there instantly."

Nick raised his whip. It was not that that stopped Mr. Riddle, but a sign about the lad's nostrils.

"Harry Riddle," said the boy, "if it weren't for you, I'd be riding in this coach to-day with my mother. I don't want to ride with her, but I will go to the races. If you try to take me down, I'll do my best to kill you," and he lifted the loaded end of the whip.

Mrs. Temple's beautiful face had by this time been thrust out of the door.

"For the love of heaven, Harry, let him come in with us. We're late enough as it is."

Mr. Riddle turned on his heel. He tried to glare at Nick, but he broke into a laugh instead.

"Come down, Satan," says he. "God help the woman you love and the man you fight."

And so Nicholas jumped down, and into the coach. The footman picked himself up, more scared than injured, and the vehicle took its lumbering way for the race-course, I following.

I have seen many courses since, but none to equal that in the gorgeous dress of those who watched. There had been many, many more in former years, so I heard people say. This was the only sign that a war was in progress, — the scanty number of gentry present, — for all save the indifferent were gone to Charlestown or elsewhere. I recall it dimly, as a blaze of color passing: merrymaking, jesting, feasting, — a rare contrast, I thought, to the sight I had beheld in Charlestown Bay but a while before. Yet so runs the world, — strife at one man's home, and peace and contentment at his neighbor's; sorrow here, and rejoicing not a league away.

Master Nicholas played one prank that evening that was near to costing dear. My lady Temple made up a party for Temple Bow at the course, two other coaches to come and some gentlemen riding. As Nick and I were running through the paddock we came suddenly upon Mr. Harry Riddle and a stout, swarthy gentleman standing together. The stout gentleman was counting out big gold pieces in his hand and giving them to Mr. Riddle.

"Lucky dog!" said the stout gentleman; "you'll ride back with her, and you've won all I've got." And he dug Mr. Riddle in the ribs.

"You'll have it again when we play to-night, Darnley," answered Mr. Riddle, crossly. "And as for the seat in the coach, you are welcome to it. That firebrand of a lad is on the front seat."

"D—n the lad," said the stout gentleman. "I'll take it, and you can ride my horse. He'll — he'll carry you, I reckon." His voice had a way of cracking into a mellow laugh.

At that Mr. Riddle went off in a towering bad humor, and afterwards I heard him cursing the stout gentleman's

black groom as he mounted his great horse. And then he cursed the horse as it reared and plunged, while the stout gentleman stood at the coach door, cackling at his discomfiture. The gentleman did ride home with Mrs. Temple, Nick going into another coach. I afterwards discovered that the gentleman had bribed him with a guinea. And Mr. Riddle more than once came near running down my pony on his big charger, and he swore at me roundly, too.

That night there was a gay supper party in the big dining room at Temple Bow. Nick and I looked on from the gallery window. It was a pretty sight. The long mahogany board reflecting the yellow flames of the candles, and spread with bright silver and shining dishes loaded with dainties, the gentlemen and ladies in brilliant dress, the hurrying servants, — all were of a new and strange world to me. And presently, after the ladies were gone, the gentlemen tossed off their wine and roared over their jokes, and followed into the drawing-room. This I noticed, that only Mr. Harry Riddle sat silent and morose, and that he had drunk more than the others.

"Come, Davy," said Nick to me, "let's go and watch them again."

"But how?" I asked, for the drawing-room windows were up some distance from the ground, and there was no gallery on that side.

"I'll show you," said he, running into the garden. After searching awhile in the dark, he found a ladder the gardener had left against a tree ; after much straining, we carried the ladder to the house and set it up under one of the windows of the drawing-room. Then we both clambered cautiously to the top and looked in.

The company were at cards, silent, save for a low remark now and again. The little tables were ranged along by the windows, and it chanced that Mr. Harry Riddle sat so close to us that we could touch him. On his right sat Mr. Darnley, the stout gentleman, and in the other seats two ladies. Between Mr. Riddle and Mr. Darnley was a pile of silver and gold pieces. There was

not room for two of us in comfort at the top of the ladder, so I gave place to Nick, and sat on a lower rung. Presently I saw him raise himself, reach in, and duck quickly.

"Feel that," he whispered to me, chuckling and holding out his hand.

It was full of money.

"But that's stealing, Nick," I said, frightened.

"Of course I'll give it back," he whispered indignantly.

Instantly there came loud words and the scraping of chairs within the room, and a woman's scream. I heard Mr. Riddle's voice say thickly, amid the silence that followed: —

"Mr. Darnley, you're a d—d thief, sir."

"You shall answer for this, when you are sober, sir," said Mr. Darnley.

Then there came more scraping of chairs, all the company talking excitedly at once. Nick and I scrambled to the ground, and we did the very worst thing we could possibly have done, — we took the ladder away.

There was little sleep for me that night. I had first of all besought Nick to go up into the drawing-room and give the money back. But some strange obstinacy in him resisted.

"'Twill serve Harry well for what he did to-day," said he.

My next thought was to find Mr. Mason, but he was gone up the river to visit a sick parishioner. I had seen enough of the world to know that gentlemen fought for less than what had occurred in the drawing-room that evening. And though I had neither love nor admiration for Mr. Riddle, and though the stout gentleman was no friend of mine, I cared not to see either of them killed for a prank. But Nick would not listen to me, and went to sleep in the midst of my urgings.

"Davy," said he, pinching me, "do you know what you are?"

"No," said I.

"You're a granny," he said. And that was the last word I could get out of him. But I lay awake a long

time, thinking. Breed had whiled away for me one hot morning in Charlestown with an account of the gentry and their doings, many of which he related in an awed whisper that I could not understand. They were wild doings indeed to me. But strangest of all seemed the duels, conducted with a decorum and ceremony as rigorous as the law.

"Did you ever see a duel, Breed?" I had asked.

"Yessah," said Breed, dramatically, rolling the whites of his eyes.

"Where?"

"Whah? Down on de riveh bank at Temple Bow in de ea'ly mo'nin'! Dey mos' commonly fights at de dawn."

Breed had also told me where he was in hiding at the time, and that was what troubled me. Try as I would, I could not remember. It had sounded like *Clam Shell.* That I recalled, and how Breed had looked out at the sword-play through the cracks of the closed shutters, agonized between fear of ghosts within and the drama without. At the first faint light that came into our window I awakened Nick.

"Listen," I said; "do you know a place called *Clam Shell?*"

He turned over, but I punched him persistently until he sat up.

"What the deuce ails you, Davy?" he asked, rubbing his eyes. "Have you nightmare?"

"Do you know a place called *Clam Shell*, down on the river bank, Nick?"

"Why," he replied, "you must be thinking of Cram's Hell."

"What's that?" I asked.

"It's a house that used to belong to Cram, who was an overseer. The niggers hated him, and he was killed in bed by a big black nigger chief from Africa. The niggers won't go near the place. They say it's haunted."

"Get up," said I; "we're going there now."

Nick sprang out of bed and began to get into his clothes.

"Is it a game?" he asked.

"Yes." He was always ready for a game.

We climbed out of the window, and made our way in the mist through the long, wet grass, Nick leading. He took a path through a dark forest swamp, over logs that spanned the stagnant waters, and at length, just as the mist was growing pearly in the light, we came out at a tumble-down house that stood in an open glade by the river's bank.

"What's to do now?" said Nick.

"We must get into the house," I answered. But I confess I didn't care for the looks of it.

Nick stared at me.

"Very good, Davy," he said; "I'll follow where you go."

It was a Saturday morning. Why I recall this I do not know. It has no special significance.

I tried the door. With a groan and a shriek it gave way, disclosing the blackness inside. We started back involuntarily. I looked at Nick, and Nick at me. He was very pale, and so must I have been. But such was the respect we each held for the other's courage that neither dared flinch. And so I walked in, although it seemed as if my shirt was made of needle points and my hair stood on end. The crackings of the old floor were to me like the shots in Charlestown Bay. Our hearts beating wildly, we made our way into a farther room. It was like walking into the beyond.

"Is there a window here?" I asked Nick, my voice sounding like a shout.

"Yes, ahead of us."

Groping for it, I suddenly received a shock that set me reeling. Human nature could stand no more. We both turned tail and ran out of the house as fast as we could, and stood in the wet grass, panting. Then shame came.

"Let's open the window first," I suggested. So we walked around the house and pried the solid shutter from its fastenings. Then, gathering our courage, we went in again at the door. In the dim light let into the farther

room we saw a four-poster bed, old and cheap, with ragged curtains. It was this that I had struck in my groping.

"The chief killed Cram there," said Nick, in an awed voice, "in that bed. What do you want to do here, Davy?"

"Wait," I said, though I had as little mind to wait as ever in my life. "Stand here by the window."

We waited there. The mist rose. The sun peeped over the bank of dense green forest and spread rainbow colors on the still waters of the river. Now and again a fish broke, or a great bird swooped down and slit the surface. A far-off snatch of melody came to our ears, — the slaves were going to work. Nothing more. And little by little grave misgivings gnawed at my soul of the wisdom of coming to this place. Doubtless there were many other spots.

"Davy," said Nick, at last, "I'm sorry I took that money. What are we here for?"

"Hush!" I whispered; "do you hear anything?"

"No."

I did, and distinctly. For I had been brought up in the forest.

"I hear voices," he said presently, "coming this way."

They were very clear to me by then. Emerging from the forest path were five gentlemen. The leader, more plainly dressed than the others, carried a leather case. Behind him was the stout figure of Mr. Darnley, his face solemn; and last of all came Mr. Harry Riddle, very pale, but cutting the tops of the long grass with a switch. Nick seized my arm.

"They are going to fight," said he.

"Yes," I replied, "and we are here to stop them, now."

"No, not now," he said, holding me still. "We'll have some more fun out of this yet."

"Fun?" I echoed.

"Yes," he said excitedly. "Leave it to me. I shan't let them fight."

And that instant we changed generals, David giving place to Nicholas.

Mr. Riddle retired with one gentleman to a side of the little patch of grass, and Mr. Darnley and a friend to another. The fifth gentleman took a position halfway between the two, and, opening the leather case, laid it down on the grass, where its contents glistened.

"That's Dr. Ball," whispered Nick. And his voice shook with excitement.

Mr. Riddle stripped off his coat and waistcoat and ruffles, and his sword-belt, and Mr. Darnley did the same. Both gentlemen drew their swords and advanced to the middle of the lawn, and stood opposite one another, with flowing linen shirts open at the throat, and bared heads. They were indeed a contrast. Mr. Riddle, tall and white, with closed lips, glared at his opponent. Mr. Darnley cut a merrier figure, — rotund and flushed, with fat calves and short arms, though his countenance was sober enough. All at once the two were circling their swords in the air, and then Nick had flung open the shutter and leaped through the window, and was running and shouting towards the astonished gentlemen, all of whom wheeled to face him. He jingled as he ran.

"What in the devil's name now?" cried Mr. Riddle, angrily. "Here's this imp again."

Nicholas stopped in front of him, and, thrusting his hand in his breeches pocket, fished out a handful of gold and silver, which he held out to the confounded Mr. Riddle.

"Harry," said he, "here's something of yours I found last night."

"You found?" echoed Mr. Riddle, in a strange voice, amidst a dead silence. "You found where?"

"On the table beside you."

"And where the deuce were you?" Mr. Riddle demanded.

"In the window behind you," said Nick, calmly.

This piece of information, to Mr. Riddle's plain discomfiture, was greeted with a roar of laughter, Mr. Darnley himself laughing loudest. Nor were these gentlemen satisfied with that. They crowded around Mr. Riddle and slapped him on the back, Mr. Darnley joining in with the

rest. And presently Mr. Riddle flung away his sword, and laughed, too, giving his hand to Mr. Darnley.

At length Mr. Darnley turned to Nick, who had stood all this while behind them, unmoved.

"My friend," said he, seriously, "such is your regard for human life, you will probably one day be a pirate or an outlaw. This time we've had a laugh. The next time somebody will be weeping. I wish I were your father."

"I wish you were," said Nick.

This took Mr. Darnley's breath. He glanced at the other gentlemen, who returned his look significantly. He laid his hand kindly on the lad's head.

"Nick," said he, "I wish to God I were your father."

After that they all went home, very merry, to breakfast, Nick and I coming after them. Nick was silent until we reached the house.

"Davy," said he, then, "how old are you?"

"Ten," I answered. "How old did you believe me?"

"Eighty," said he.

The next day, being Sunday, we all gathered in the little church to hear Mr. Mason preach. Nick and I sat in the high box pew of the family with Mrs. Temple, who paid not the least attention to the sermon. As for me, the rhythm of it held me in fascination. Mr. Mason had written it out and that afternoon read over this part of it to Nick. The quotation I recall, having since read it many times, and the gist of it was in this wise: —

"And he said unto him, 'What thou wilt have thou wilt have, despite the sin of it. Blessed are the stolid, and thrice cursed he who hath imagination, — for that imagination shall devour him. And in thy life a sin shall be presented unto thee with a great longing. God, who is in heaven, gird thee for that struggle, my son, for it will surely come. That it may be said of you, "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Seven days shalt thou wrestle with thy soul; seven nights shall evil haunt thee, and how thou shalt come forth from that struggle no man may know.'"

CHAPTER VI

MAN PROPOSES, BUT GOD DISPOSES

A WEEK passed, and another Sunday came, — a Sunday so still and hot and moist that steam seemed to rise from the heavy trees, — an idle day for master and servant alike. A hush was in the air, and a presage of we knew not what. It weighed upon my spirits, and even Nick's, and we wandered restlessly under the trees, seeking for distraction.

About two o'clock a black line came on the horizon, and slowly crept higher until it broke into giant, fantastic shapes. Mutterings arose, but the sun shone hot as ever.

"We're to have a hurricane," said Nick. "I wish we might have it and be done with it."

At five the sun went under. I remember that Madame was lolling listless in the garden, daintily arrayed in fine linen, trying to talk to Mr. Mason, when a sound startled us. It was the sound of swift hoof beats on the soft drive.

Mrs. Temple got up, an unusual thing. Perchance she was expecting a message from some of the gentlemen; or else she may well have been tired of Mr. Mason. Nick and I were before her, and, running through the house, arrived at the portico in time to see a negro ride up on a horse covered with lather.

It was the same negro who had fetched me hither from Mr. Lowndes. And when I saw him my heart stood still lest he had brought news of my father.

"What's to do, boy?" cried Nicholas to him.

The boy held in his hand a letter with a great red seal.

"Fo' Mistis Temple," he said, and, looking at me queerly,

he took off his cap as he jumped from the horse. Mistress Temple herself having arrived, he handed her the letter. She took it, and broke the seal carelessly.

"Oh," she said, "it's only from Mr. Lowndes. I wonder what he wishes now."

Every moment of her reading was for me an agony, and she read slowly. The last words she spoke aloud: —

"'If you do not wish the lad, send him to me, as Kate is very fond of him.' So Kate is very fond of him," she repeated. And handing the letter to Mr. Mason, she added, "Tell him, Parson."

The words burned into my soul and seared it. And to this day I tremble with anger as I think of them. The scene comes before me: the sky, the darkened portico, and Nicholas running after his mother crying: "Oh, mamma, how could you! How could you!"

Mr. Mason bent over me in compassion, and smoothed my hair.

"David," said he, in a thick voice, "you are a brave boy, David. You will need all your courage now, my son. May God keep your nature sweet!"

He led me gently into the arbor and told me how, under Captain Baskin, the detachment had been ambushed by the Cherokees; and how my father, with Ensign Calhoun and another, had been killed, fighting bravely. The rest of the company had cut their way through and reached the settlements after terrible hardships.

I was left an orphan.

I shall not dwell here on the bitterness of those moments. We have all known sorrows in our lives, — great sorrows. The clergyman was a wise man, and did not strive to comfort me with words. But he sat there under the leaves with his arm about me until a blinding bolt split the blackness of the sky and the thunder rent our ears, and a Caribbean storm broke over Temple Bow with all the fury of the tropics. Then he led me through the drenching rain into the house, nor heeded the wet himself on his Sunday coat.

A great anger stayed me in my sorrow. I would no

longer tarry under Mrs. Temple's roof, though the world without were a sea or a desert. The one resolution to escape rose stronger and stronger within me, and I determined neither to eat nor sleep until I had got away. The thought of leaving Nick was heavy indeed; and when he ran to me in the dark hall and threw his arms around me, it needed all my strength to keep from crying aloud.

"Davy," he said passionately, "Davy, you mustn't mind what she says. She never means anything she says — she never cares for anything save her pleasure. You and I will stay here until we are old enough to run away to Kentucky. Davy! Answer me, Davy!"

I could not, try as I would. There were no words that would come with honesty. But I pulled him down on the mahogany settle near the door which led into the back gallery, and there we sat huddled together in silence, while the storm raged furiously outside and the draughts banged the great doors of the house. In the lightning flashes I saw Nick's face, and it haunted me afterwards through many years of wandering. On it was written a sorrow for me greater than my own sorrow. For God had given to this lad every human passion and compassion.

The storm rolled away with the night, and Mammy came through the hall with a candle.

"Whah is you, Marse Nick? Whah is you, honey? You' suppah's ready."

And so we went into our little dining room, but I would not eat. The good old negress brushed her eyes with her apron as she pressed a cake upon me she had made herself, for she had grown fond of me. And presently we went away silently to bed.

It was a long, long time before Nick's breathing told me that he was asleep. He held me tightly clutched to him, and I know that he feared I would leave him. The thought of going broke my heart, but I never once wavered in my resolve, and I lay staring into the darkness, pondering what to do. I thought of good Mr. Lowndes and his wife, and I decided to go to Charlestown. Some of my boyish motives come back to me now: I should be

near Nick; and even at that age, — having lived a life of self-reliance, — I thought of gaining an education and of rising to a place of trust. Yes, I would go to Mr. Lowndes, and ask him to let me work for him and so earn my education.

With a heavy spirit I crept out of bed, slowly disengaging Nick's arm lest he should wake. He turned over and sighed in his sleep. Carefully I dressed myself, and after I was dressed I could not refrain from slipping to the bedside to bend over him once again, — for he was the only one in my life with whom I had found true companionship. Then I climbed carefully out of the window, and so down the corner of the house to the ground.

It was starlight, and a waning moon hung in the sky. I made my way through the drive between the black shadows of the forest, and came at length to the big gates at the entrance, locked for the night. A strange thought of their futility struck me as I climbed the rail fence beside them, and pushed on into the main road, the mud sucking under my shoes as I went. As I try now to cast my memory back I can recall no fear, only a vast sense of loneliness, and the very song of it seemed to be sung in never ending refrain by the insects of the night. I had been alone in the mountains before. I have crossed great strips of wilderness since, but always there was love to go back to. Then I was leaving the only being in the world that remained to me.

I must have walked two hours or more before I came to the mire of a cross-road, and there I stood in a quandary of doubt as to which side led to Charlestown.

As I lingered a light began to tremble in the heavens. A cock crew in the distance. I sat down on a fallen log to rest. But presently, as the light grew, I heard shouts which drew nearer and deeper and brought me to my feet in an uncertainty of expectation. Next came the rattling of chains, the scramble of hoofs in the mire, and here was a wagon with a big canvas cover. Beside the straining horses was a great, burly man with a red beard, cracking his long whip, and calling to the horses in a strange

tongue. He stopped still beside his panting animals when he saw me, his high boots sunk in the mud.

"Gut morning, poy," he said, wiping his red face with his sleeve; "what you do here?"

"I am going to Charlestown," I answered.

"Ach!" he cried, "dot is pad. Mein poy, he run avay. You are ein gut poy, I know. I vill pay ein gut price to help me vit mein wagon — *ja*."

"Where are you going?" I demanded, with a sudden wavering.

"Up country — pack country. You know der Proad River — yes?"

No, I did not. But a longing came upon me for the old backwoods life, with its freedom and self-reliance, and a hatred for this steaming country of heat and violent storms, and artificiality and pomp. And I had a desire, even at that age, to make my own way in the world.

"What will you give me?" I asked.

At that he put his finger to his nose.

"Thruppence py the day."

I shook my head. He looked at me queerly.

"How old you pe, — twelve, yes?"

Now I had no notion of telling him. So I said: "Is this the Charlestown road?"

"Fourpence!" he cried, "dot is riches."

"I will go for sixpence," I answered.

"Mein Gott!" he cried, "sixpence. Dot is robbery." But seeing me obdurate, he added: "I vill give it, because ein poy I must have. Vat is your name, — Tavid? You are ein sharp poy, Tavid."

And so I went with him.

In writing a biography, the relative value of days and years should hold. There are days which count in space for years, and years for days. I spent the time on the whole happily with this Dutchman, whose name was Hans Köppel. He talked merrily save when he spoke of the war against England, and then contemptuously, for he was a bitter English partisan. And in contrast to this he would dwell for hours on a king he called Friedrich

der Grosse, and a war he waged that was a war; and how this mighty king had fought a mighty queen at Rossbach and Leuthen in his own country, — battles that were battles.

"And you were there, Hans?" I asked him once.

"*Ja*," he said, "but I did not stay."

"You ran away?"

"*Ja*," Hans would answer, laughing, "run avay. I love peace, Tavid. Dot is vy I come here, and now," bitterly, "and now ve haf var again once."

I would say nothing; but I must have looked my disapproval, for he went on to explain that in Saxe-Gotha, where he was born, men were made to fight whether they would or no; and they were stolen from their wives at night by soldiers of the great king, or lured away by fair promises.

Travelling with incredible slowness, in due time we came to a county called Orangeburg, where all were Dutchmen like Hans, and very few spoke English. And they all thought like Hans, and loved peace, and hated the Congress. On Sundays, as we lay over at the taverns, these would be filled with a rollicking crowd of fiddlers and dancers, quaintly dressed, the women bringing their children and babies. At such times Hans would be drunk, and I would have to feed the tired horses and mount watch over the cargo. I had many adventures, but none worth the telling here. And at length we came to Hans's farm, in a prettily rolling country on the Broad River. Hans's wife spoke no English at all, nor did the brood of children running about the house. I had small fancy for staying in such a place, and so Hans paid me two crowns for my three weeks' service; I think, with real regret, for labor was scarce in those parts, and though I was young, I knew how to work. And I could at least have guided his plough in the furrow and cared for his cattle.

It was the first money I had earned in my life, and a prouder day than many I have had since.

For the convenience of travellers passing that way, Hans kept a tavern, — if it could have been dignified by such a

name. It was in truth merely a log house with shake-downs, and stood across the rude road from his log farm-house. And he gave me leave to sleep there and to work for my board until I cared to leave. It so chanced that on the second day after my arrival a pack-train came along, guided by a nettlesome old man and a strong, black-haired lass of sixteen or thereabouts. The old man, whose name was Ripley, wore a nut-brown hunting shirt trimmed with red cotton; and he had no sooner slipped the packs from his horses than he began to rail at Hans, who stood looking on.

"You damned Dutchmen be all Tories, and worse," he cried; "you stay here and till your farms while our boys are off in the hill towns fighting Cherokees. I wish the devils had every one of your fat sculps. Polly Ann, water the nags."

Hans replied to this sally with great vigor, lapsing into Dutch. Polly Ann led the scrawny ponies to the trough, but her eyes snapped with merriment as she listened. She was a wonderfully comely lass, despite her loose cotton gown and poke-bonnet and the shoepacks on her feet. She had blue eyes, the whitest, strongest of teeth, and the rosiest of faces.

"Gran'pa hates a Dutchman wuss'n pizen," she said to me. "So do I. We've all been burned out and sculped up river — and they never give us so much as a man or a measure of corn."

I helped her feed the animals, and tether them, and loose their bells for the night, and carry the packs under cover.

"All the boys is gone to join Rutherford and lam the Indians," she continued, "so Gran'pa and I had to go to the settlements. There wahn't any one else. What's your name?" she demanded suddenly.

I told her.

She sat down on a log at the corner of the house, and pulled me down beside her.

"And whar be you from?"

I told her. It was impossible to look into her face and

not tell her. She listened eagerly, now with compassion, and now showing her white teeth in amusement. And when I had done, much to my discomfiture, she seized me in her strong arms and kissed me.

"Poor Davy," she cried, "you ain't got a home. You shall come home with us."

Catching me by the hand, she ran like a deer across the road to where her grandfather was still quarrelling violently with Hans, and pulled him backward by the skirts of his hunting shirt. I looked for another and mightier explosion from the old backwoodsman, but to my astonishment he seemed to forget Hans's existence, and turned and smiled on her benevolently.

"Polly Ann," said he, "what be you about now?"

"Gran'pa," said she, "here's Davy Trimble, who's a good boy, and his pa is just killed by the Cherokees along with Baskin, and he wants work and a home, and he's comin' along with us."

"All right, David," answered Mr. Ripley, mildly, "ef Polly Ann says so, you kin come. Whar was you raised?"

I told him on the upper Yadkin.

"You don't tell me," said he. "Did ye ever know Dan'l Boone?"

"I did, indeed, sir," I answered, my face lighting up. "Can you tell me where he is now?"

"He's gone to Kaintuckee, them new settlements, fer good. And ef I wasn't eighty years old, I'd go thar, too."

"I reckon I'll go thar when I'm married," said Polly Ann, and blushed redder than ever. Drawing me to her, she said, "I'll take you, too, Davy."

"When you marry that wuthless Tom McChesney," said her grandfather, testily.

"He's not wuthless," said Polly, hotly. "He's the best man in Rutherford's army. He'll git more sculps then any of 'em, — you see."

"Tavy is ein gut poy," Hans put in, for he had recovered his composure. "I wish much he stay mit me."

As for me, Polly Ann never consulted me on the subject — nor had she need to. I would have followed her to kingdom come, and at the thought of reaching the mountains my heart leaped with joy. We all slept in the one flea-infested, windowless room of the "tavern" that night; and before dawn I was up and untethered the horses, and Polly Ann and I together lifted the two bushels of alum salt on one of the beasts and the ploughshare on the other. By daylight we had left Hans and his farm forever.

I can see the lass now, as she strode along the trace by the flowing river, through sunlight and shadow, straight and supple and strong. Sometimes she sang like a bird, and the forest rang. Sometimes she would make fun of her grandfather or of me; and again she would be silent for an hour at a time, staring ahead, and then I knew she was thinking of that Tom McChesney. She would wake from those reveries with a laugh, and give me a push to send me rolling down a bank.

"What's the matter, Davy? You look as solemn as a wood-owl. What a little wiseacre you be!"

Once I retorted, "You were thinking of that Tom McChesney."

"Ay, that she was, I'll warrant," snapped her grandfather.

Polly Ann replied, with a merry peal of laughter, "You are both jealous of Tom — both of you. But, Davy, when you see him you'll love him as much as I do."

"I'll not," I said sturdily.

"He's a man to look upon —"

"He's a rip-roarer," old man Ripley put in. "Ye're daft about him."

"That I am," said Polly, flushing and subsiding; "but he'll not know it."

As we rose into the more rugged country we passed more than one charred cabin that told its silent story of Indian massacre. Only on the scattered hill farms women and boys and old men were working in the fields, all save the scalawags having gone to join Rutherford. There were

plenty of these around the taverns to make eyes at Polly Ann and open love to her, had she allowed them; but she treated them in return to such scathing tirades that they were glad to desist — all but one. He must have been an escaped redemptioner, for he wore jauntily a swanskin three-cornered hat and stained breeches of a fine cloth. He was a bold, vain fellow.

"My beauty," says he, as we sat at supper, "silver and Wedgwood better become you than pewter and a trencher."

"And I reckon a rope would sit better on your neck than a ruff," retorted Polly Ann, while the company shouted with laughter. But he was not the kind to become discomfited.

"I'd give a guinea to see you in silk. But I vow your hair looks better as it is."

"Not so yours," said she, like lightning; "'twould look better to me hanging on the belt of one of them red devils."

In the morning, when he would have lifted the pack of alum salt, Polly Ann gave him a push that sent him sprawling. But she did it in such good nature withal that the fellow mistook her. He scrambled to his feet, flung his arm about her waist, and kissed her. Whereupon I hit him with a sapling, and he staggered and let her go.

"You imp of hell!" he cried, rubbing the bump. He made a vicious dash at me that boded no good, but I slipped behind the hominy block; and Polly Ann, who was like a panther on her feet, dashed at him and gave him a buffet in the cheek that sent him reeling again.

After that we were more devoted friends than ever.

We travelled slowly, day by day, until I saw the mountains lift blue against the western sky, and the sight of them was like home once more. I loved them; and though I thought with sadness of my father, I was on the whole happier with Polly Ann than I had been in the lonely cabin on the Yadkin. Her spirits flagged a little as she drew near home, but old Mr. Ripley's rose.

"There's Burr's," he would say, "and O'Hara's and Williamson's," marking the cabins set amongst the stump-dotted corn-fields. "And thar," sweeping his hand at a blackened heap of logs lying on the stones, "thar's whar Nell Tyler and her baby was sculped."

"Poor Nell," said Polly Ann, the tears coming into her eyes as she turned away.

"And Jim Tyler was killed gittin' to the fort. He can't say I didn't warn him."

"I reckon he'll never say nuthin', now," said Polly Ann.

It was in truth a dismal sight, — the shapeless timbers, the corn, planted with such care, choked with weeds, and the poor utensils of the little family scattered and broken before the door-sill. These same Indians had killed my father; and there surged up in my breast that hatred of the painted race felt by every backwoods boy in my time.

Towards the end of the day the trace led into a beautiful green valley, and in the middle of it was a stream shining in the afternoon sun. Then Polly Ann fell entirely silent. And presently, as the shadows grew purple, we came to a cabin set under some spreading trees on a knoll where a woman sat spinning at the door, three children playing at her feet. She stared at us so earnestly that I looked at Polly Ann, and saw her redden and pale. The children were the first to come shouting at us, and then the woman dropped her wool and ran down the slope straight into Polly Ann's arms. Mr. Ripley halted the horses with a grunt.

The two women drew off and looked into each other's faces. Then Polly Ann dropped her eyes.

"Have ye — ?" she said, and stopped.

"No, Polly Ann, not one word sence Tom and his Pa went. What do folks say in the settlements?"

Polly Ann turned up her nose.

"They don't know nuthin' in the settlements," she replied.

"I wrote to Tom and told him you was gone," said the older woman. "I knowed he'd wanter hear."

And she looked meaningly at Polly Ann, who said nothing. The children had been pulling at the girl's skirts, and suddenly she made a dash at them. They scattered, screaming with delight, and she after them.

"Howdy, Mr. Ripley?" said the woman, smiling a little.

"Howdy, Mis' McChesney?" said the old man, shortly.

So this was the mother of Tom, of whom I had heard so much. She was, in truth, a motherly-looking person, her fleshy face creased with strong character.

"Who hev ye brought with ye?" she asked, glancing at me.

"A lad Polly Ann took a shine to in the settlements," said the old man. "Polly Ann! Polly Ann!" he cried sharply, "we'll hev to be gittin' home." And then, as though an afterthought (which it really was not), he added, "How be ye for salt, Mis' McChesney?"

"So-so," said she.

"Wal, I reckon a little might come handy," said he. And to the girl who stood panting beside him, "Polly, give Mis' McChesney some salt."

Polly Ann did, and generously, — the salt they had carried with so much labor threescore and ten miles from the settlements. Then we took our departure, the girl turning for one last look at Tom's mother, and at the cabin where he had dwelt. We were all silent the rest of the way, climbing the slender trail through the forest over the gap into the next valley. For I was jealous of Tom. I am not ashamed to own it now.

In the smoky haze that rises just before night lets her curtain fall, we descended the farther slope, and came to Mr. Ripley's cabin.

CHAPTER VII

IN SIGHT OF THE BLUE WALL ONCE MORE

POLLY ANN lived alone with her grandfather, her father and mother having been killed by Indians some years before. There was that bond between us, had we needed one. Her father had built the cabin, a large one with a loft and a ladder climbing to it, and a sleeping room and a kitchen. The cabin stood on a terrace that nature had levelled, looking across a swift and shallow stream towards the mountains. There was the truck patch, with its yellow squashes and melons, and cabbages and beans, where Polly Ann and I worked through the hot mornings; and the corn patch, with the great stumps of the primeval trees standing in it. All around us the silent forest threw its encircling arms, spreading up the slopes, higher and higher, to crown the crests with the little pines and hemlocks and balsam fir.

There had been no meat save bacon since the McChesneys had left, for of late game had become scarce, and old Mr. Ripley was too feeble to go on the long hunts. So one day, when Polly Ann was gone across the ridge, I took down the long rifle from the buckhorns over the hearth, and the hunting knife and powder-horn and pouch beside it, and trudged up the slope to a game trail I discovered. All day I waited, until the forest light grew gray, when a buck came and stood over the water, raising his head and stamping from time to time. I took aim in the notch of a sapling, brought him down, cleaned and skinned and dragged him into the water, and triumphantly hauled one of his hams down the trail. Polly Ann gave a cry of joy when she saw me.

"Davy," she exclaimed, "little Davy, I reckoned you

was gone away from us. Gran'pa, here is Davy back, and he has shot a deer."

"You don't say?" replied Mr. Ripley, surveying me and my booty with a grim smile.

"How could you, Gran'pa?" said Polly Ann, reproachfully.

"Wal," said Mr. Ripley, "the gun was gone, an' Davy. I reckon he ain't sich a little rascal after all."

Polly Ann and I went up the next day, and brought the rest of the buck merrily homeward. After that I became the hunter of the family; but oftener than not I returned tired and empty-handed, and ravenously hungry. Indeed, our chief game was rattlesnakes, which we killed by the dozens in the corn and truck patches.

As Polly Ann and I went about our daily chores, we would talk of Tom McChesney. Often she would sit idle at the hand-mill, a light in her eyes that I would have given kingdoms for. One ever memorable morning, early in the crisp autumn, a grizzled man strode up the trail, and Polly Ann dropped the ear of corn she was husking and stood still, her bosom heaving. It was Mr. McChesney, Tom's father — alone.

"No, Polly Ann," he cried, "there ain't nuthin' happened. We've laid out the hill towns. But the Virginny men wanted a guide, and Tom volunteered, and so he ain't come back with Rutherford's boys."

Polly Ann seized him by the shoulders, and looked him in the face.

"Be you tellin' the truth, Warner McChesney?" she said in a hard voice.

"As God hears me," said Warner McChesney, solemnly. "He sent ye this."

He drew from the bosom of his hunting shirt a soiled piece of birch bark, scrawled over with rude writing. Polly seized it, and flew into the house.

The hickories turned a flaunting yellow, the oaks a copper-red, the leaves crackled on the Catawba vines, and still Tom McChesney did not come. The Cherokees were homeless and houseless and subdued, — their hill towns

burned, their corn destroyed, their squaws and children wanderers. One by one the men of the Grape Vine settlement returned to save what they might of their crops, and plough for the next year — Burrs, O'Haras, Williamsons, and Winns. Yes, Tom had gone to guide the Virginia boys. All had tales to tell of his prowess, and how he had saved Rutherford's men from ambush at the risk of his life. To all of which Polly Ann listened with conscious pride, and replied with sallies.

"I reckon I don't care if he never comes back," she would cry. "If he likes the Virginny boys more than me, there be others here I fancy more than him."

Whereupon the informant, if he were not bound in matrimony, would begin to make eyes at Polly Ann. Or, if he were bolder, and went at the wooing in the more demonstrative fashion of the backwoods — Polly Ann had a way of hitting him behind the ear with most surprising effect.

One windy morning when the leaves were kiting over the valley we were getting ready for pounding hominy, when a figure appeared on the trail. Steadying the hood of her sunbonnet with her hand, the girl gazed long and earnestly, and a lump came into my throat at the thought that the comer might be Tom McChesney. Polly Ann sat down at the block again in disgust.

"It's only Chauncey Dike," she said.

"Who's Chauncey Dike?" I asked.

"He reckons he's a buck," was all that Polly Ann vouchsafed.

Chauncey drew near with a strut. He had very long black hair, a new coonskin cap with a long tassel, and a new blue-fringed hunting shirt. What first caught my eye was a couple of withered Indian scalps that hung by their long locks from his girdle. Chauncey Dike was certainly handsome.

"Wal, Polly Ann, are ye tired of hanging out fer Tom?" he cried, when a dozen paces away.

"I wouldn't be if you was the only one left ter choose," Polly Ann retorted.

Chauncey Dike stopped in his tracks and haw-hawed with laughter. But I could see that he was not very much pleased.

"Wal," said he, "I 'low ye won't see Tom very soon. He's gone to Kaintuckee."

"Has he?" said Polly Ann, with brave indifference.

"He met a gal on the trail — a blazin' fine gal," said Chauncey Dike. "She was goin' to Kaintuckee. And Tom — he 'lowed he'd go 'long."

Polly Ann laughed, and fingered the withered pieces of skin at Chauncey's girdle.

"Did Tom give you them sculps?" she asked innocently.

Chauncey drew up stiffly.

"Who? Tom McChesney? I reckon he ain't got none to give. This here's from a big brave at Noewee, whar the Virginny boys was surprised." And he held up the one with the longest tuft. "He'd liked to tomahawked me out'n the briers, but I throwed him fust."

"Shucks," said Polly Ann, pounding the corn, "I reckon you found him dead."

But that night, as we sat before the fading red of the backlog, the old man dozing in his chair, Polly Ann put her hand on mine.

"Davy," she said softly, "do you reckon he's gone to Kaintuckee?"

How could I tell?

The days passed. The wind grew colder, and one subdued dawn we awoke to find that the pines had fantastic white arms, and the stream ran black between white banks. All that day, and for many days after, the snow added silently to the thickness of its blanket, and winter was upon us. It was a long winter and a rare one. Polly Ann sat by the little window of the cabin, spinning the flax into linsey-woolsey. And she made a hunting shirt for her grandfather, and another little one for me which she fitted with careful fingers. But as she spun, her wheel made the only music — for Polly Ann sang no more. Once I came on her as she was thrusting the tattered piece of birch

bark into her gown, but she never spoke to me more of Tom McChesney. When, from time to time, the snow melted on the hillsides, I sometimes surprised a deer there and shot him with the heavy rifle. And so the months wore on till spring.

The buds reddened and popped, and the briers grew pink and white. Through the lengthening days we toiled in the truck patch, but always as I bent to my work Polly Ann's face saddened me — it had once been so bright, and it should have been so at this season. Old Mr. Ripley grew querulous and savage and hard to please. In the evening, when my work was done, I often lay on the banks of the stream staring at the high ridge (its ragged edges the setting sun burned a molten gold), and the thought grew on me that I might make my way over the mountains into that land beyond, and find Tom for Polly Ann. I even climbed the watershed to the east as far as the O'Hara farm, to sound that big Irishman about the trail. For he had once gone to Kentucky, to come back with his scalp and little besides. O'Hara, with his brogue, gave me such a terrifying notion of the horrors of the Wilderness Trail that I threw up all thought of following it alone, and so I resolved to wait until I heard of some settlers going over it. But none went from the Grape Vine settlement that spring.

War was a-waging in Kentucky. The great Indian nations were making a frantic effort to drive from their hunting grounds the little bands of settlers there, and these were in sore straits.

So I waited, and gave Polly Ann no hint of my intention.

Sometimes she herself would slip away across the notch to see Mrs. McChesney and the children. She never took me with her on these journeys, but nearly always when she came back at nightfall her eyes would be red, and I knew the two women had been weeping together. There came a certain hot Sunday in July when she went on this errand, and Grandpa Ripley having gone to spend the day at old man Winn's, I was left alone. I remember I sat on the squared log of the door-step, wondering whether,

if I were to make my way to Salisbury, I could fall in with a party going across the mountains into Kentucky. And wondering, likewise, what Polly Ann would do without me. I was cleaning the long rifle, — a labor I loved, — when suddenly I looked up, startled to see a man standing in front of me. How he got there I know not. I stared at him. He was a young man, very spare and very burned, with bright red hair and blue eyes that had a kind of laughter in them, and yet were sober. His buckskin hunting shirt was old and stained and frayed by the briers, and his leggins and moccasins were wet from fording the stream. He leaned his chin on the muzzle of his gun.

"Folks live here, sonny?" said he.

I nodded.

"Whar be they?"

"Out," said I.

"Comin' back?" he asked.

"To-night," said I, and began to rub the lock.

"Be they good folks?" said he.

"Yes," I answered.

"Wal," said he, making a move to pass me, "I reckon I'll slip in and take what I've a mind to, and move on."

Now I liked the man's looks very much, but I did not know what he would do. So I got in his way and clutched the gun. It was loaded, but not primed, and I emptied a little powder from the flask in the pan. At that he grinned.

"You're a good boy, sonny," he said. "Do you reckon you could hit me if you shot?"

"Yes," I said. But I knew I could scarcely hold the gun out straight without a rest.

"And do you reckon I could hit you fust?" he asked.

At that I laughed, and he laughed.

"What's your name?"

I told him.

"Who do you love best in all the world?" said he.

It was a queer question. But I told him Polly Ann Ripley.

"Oh!" said he, after a pause. "And what's *she* like?"

"She's beautiful," I said; "she's been very kind to me. She took me home with her from the settlements when I had no place to go. She's good."

"And a sharp tongue, I reckon," said he.

"When people need it," I answered.

"Oh!" said he. And presently, "She's very merry, I'll warrant."

"She used to be, but that's gone by," I said.

"Gone by!" said he, his voice falling, "is she sick?"

"No," said I, "she's not sick, she's sad."

"Sad?" said he. It was then I noticed that he had a cut across his temple, red and barely healed. "Do you reckon your Polly Ann would give me a little mite to eat?"

This time I jumped up, ran into the house, and got down some corn-pone and a leg of turkey. For that was the rule of the border. He took them in great bites, but slowly, and he picked the bones clean.

"I had breakfast yesterday morning," said he, "about forty mile from here."

"And nothing since?" said I, in astonishment.

"Fresh air and water and exercise," said he, and sat down on the grass. He was silent for a long while, and so was I. For a notion had struck me, though I hardly dared to give it voice.

"Are you going away?" I asked at last.

He laughed.

"Why?" said he.

"If you were going to Kaintuckee—" I began, and faltered. For he stared at me very hard.

"Kaintuckee!" he said. "There's a country! But it's full of blood and Injun varmints now. Would you leave Polly Ann and go to Kaintuckee?"

"Are you going?" I said.

"I reckon I am," he said, "as soon as I kin."

"Will you take me?" I asked, breathless. "I—I won't be in your way, and I can walk—and—shoot game."

At that he bent back his head and laughed, which made me redden with anger. Then he turned and looked at me more soberly.

"You're a queer little piece," said he. "Why do you want to go thar?"

"I want to find Tom McChesney for Polly Ann," I said.

He turned away his face.

"A good-for-nothing scamp," said he.

"I have long thought so," I said.

He laughed again. It was a laugh that made me want to join him, had I not been irritated.

"And he's a scamp, you say. And why?"

"Else he would be coming back to Polly Ann."

"Mayhap he couldn't," said the stranger.

"Chauncey Dike said he went off with another girl, into Kaintuckee."

"And what did Polly Ann say to that?" the stranger demanded.

"She asked Chauncey if Tom McChesney gave him the scalps he had on his belt."

At that he laughed in good earnest, and slapped his breeches repeatedly. All at once he stopped, and stared up the ridge.

"Is that Polly Ann?" said he.

I looked, and far up the trail was a speck.

"I reckon it is," I answered, and wondered at his eyesight. "She travels over to see Tom McChesney's Ma once in a while."

He looked at me queerly.

"I reckon I'll go here and sit down, Davy," said he, "so's not to be in the way." And he walked around the corner of the house.

Polly Ann sauntered down the trail slowly, as was her wont after such an occasion. And the man behind the house twice whispered with extreme caution, "How near is she?" before she came up the path.

"Have you been lonesome, Davy?" she said.

"No," said I, "I've had a visitor."

"It's not Chauncey Dike again?" she said. "He doesn't dare show his face here."

"No, it wasn't Chauncey. This man would like to have seen you, Polly Ann. He —" here I braced myself, —"he knew Tom McChesney. He called him a good-for-nothing scamp."

"He did — did he!" said Polly Ann, very low. "I reckon it was good for him I wasn't here."

I grinned.

"What are you laughing at, you little monkey," said Polly Ann, crossly. "'Pon my soul, sometimes I reckon you are a witch."

"Polly Ann," I said, "did I ever do anything but good to you?"

She made a dive at me, and before I could escape caught me in her strong young arms and hugged me.

"You're the best friend I have, little Davy," she cried.

"I reckon that's so," said the stranger, who had risen and was standing at the corner.

Polly Ann looked at him like a frightened doe. And as she stared, uncertain whether to stay or fly, the color surged into her cheeks and mounted to her fair forehead.

"Tom!" she faltered.

"I've come back, Polly Ann," said he. But his voice was not so clear as a while ago.

Then Polly Ann surprised me.

"What made you come back?" said she, as though she didn't care a minkskin. Whereat Mr. McChesney shifted his feet.

"I reckon it was to fetch you, Polly Ann."

"I like that!" cried she. "He's come to fetch me, Davy." That was the first time in months her laugh had sounded natural. "I heerd you fetched one gal acrost the mountains, and now you want to fetch another."

"Polly Ann," says he, "there was a time when you knew a truthful man from a liar."

"That time's past," retorted she; "I reckon all men are liars. What are ye tom-foolin' about here for, Tom

McChesney, when yere Ma's breakin' her heart? I wonder ye come back at all."

"Polly Ann," says he, very serious, "I ain't a boaster. But when I think what I come through to git here, I wonder that I come back at all. The folks shut up at Harrod's said it was sure death ter cross the mountains now. I've walked two hundred miles, and fed seven times, and my sculp's as near hangin' on a Red Stick's belt as I ever want it to be."

"Tom McChesney," said Polly Ann, with her hands on her hips and her sunbonnet tilted, "that's the longest speech you ever made in your life."

I declare I lost my temper with Polly Ann then, nor did I blame Tom McChesney for turning on his heel and walking away. But he had gone no distance at all before Polly Ann, with three springs, was at his shoulder.

"Tom!" she said very gently.

He hesitated, stopped, thumped the stock of his gun on the ground, and wheeled. He looked at her doubtingly, and her eyes fell to the ground.

"Tom McChesney," said she, "you're a born fool with wimmen."

"Thank God for that," said he, his eyes devouring her.

"Ay," said she. And then, "You want me to go to Kaintuckee with you?"

"That's what I come for," he stammered, his assurance all run away again.

"I'll go," she answered, so gently that her words were all but blown away by the summer wind. He laid his rifle against a stump at the edge of the corn-field, but she bounded clear of him. Then she stood, panting, her eyes sparkling.

"I'll go," she said, raising her finger, "I'll go for one thing."

"What's that?" he demanded.

"That you'll take Davy along with us."

This time Tom had her, struggling like a wild thing in his arms, and kissing her black hair madly. As for me, I might have been in the next settlement for all they

cared. And then Polly Ann, as red as a holly berry, broke away from him and ran to me, caught me up, and hid her face in my shoulder. Tom McChesney stood looking at us, grinning, and that day I ceased to hate him.

"There's no devil ef I don't take him, Polly Ann," said he. "Why, he was a-goin' to Kaintuckee ter find me for you."

"What?" said she, raising her head.

"That's what he told me afore he knew who I was. He wanted to know ef I'd fetch him thar."

"Little Davy!" cried Polly Ann.

The last I saw of them that day they were going off up the trace towards his mother's, Polly Ann keeping ahead of him and just out of his reach. And I was very, very happy. For Tom McChesney had come back at last, and Polly Ann was herself once more.

As long as I live I shall never forget Polly Ann's wedding.

She was all for delay, and such a bunch of coquetry as I have never seen. She raised one objection after another; but Tom was a firm man, and his late experiences in the wilderness had made him impatient of trifling. He had promised the Kentucky settlers, fighting for their lives in their blockhouses, that he would come back again. And a resolute man who was a good shot was sorely missed in the country in those days.

It was not the thousand dangers and hardships of the journey across the Wilderness Trail that frightened Polly Ann. Not she. Nor would she listen to Tom when he implored her to let him return alone, to come back for her when the redskins had got over the first furies of their hatred. As for me, the thought of going with them into that promised land was like wine. Wondering what the place was like, I could not sleep of nights.

"Ain't you afeerd to go, Davy?" said Tom to me.

"You promised Polly Ann to take me," said I, indignantly.

"Davy," said he, "you ain't over handsome. 'Twouldn't improve yere looks to be bald. They hev a way of

takin' yere ha'r. Better stay behind with Gran'pa Ripley till I kin fetch ye both."

"Tom," said Polly Ann, "you kin just go back alone if you don't take Davy."

So one of the Winn boys agreed to come over to stay with old Mr. Ripley until quieter times.

The preparations for the wedding went on apace that week. I had not thought that the Grape Vine settlement held so many people. And they came from other settlements, too, for news spread quickly in that country, despite the distances. Tom McChesney was plainly a favorite with the men who had marched with Rutherford. All the week they came, loaded with offerings, turkeys and venison and pork and bear meat — greatest delicacy of all — until the cool spring was filled for the feast. From thirty miles down the Broad, a gaunt Baptist preacher on a fat white pony arrived the night before. He had been sent for to tie the knot.

Polly Ann's wedding-day dawned bright and fair, and long before the sun glistened on the corn tassels we were up and clearing out the big room. The fiddlers came first — a merry lot. And then the guests from afar began to arrive. Some of them had travelled half the night. The bridegroom's friends were assembling at the McChesney place. At last, when the sun was over the stream, rose such Indian war-whoops and shots from the ridge trail as made me think the redskins were upon us. The shouts and hurrahs grew louder and louder, the quickening thud of horses' hoofs was heard in the woods, and there burst into sight of the assembly by the truck patch two wild figures on crazed horses charging down the path towards the house. We scattered to right and left. On they came, leaping logs and brush and ditches, until one of them pulled up, yelling madly, at the very door, the foam-flecked sides of his horse moving with quick heaves.

It was Chauncey Dike, and he had won the race for the bottle of "Black Betty," — Chauncey Dike, his long, black hair shining with bear's oil. Amid the cheers of the bride's friends he leaped from his saddle, mounted a stump

and, flapping his arms, crowed in victory. Before he had done the vanguard of the groom's friends were upon us, pell-mell, all in the finest of backwoods regalia, — new hunting shirts, trimmed with bits of color, and all armed to the teeth — scalping knife, tomahawk, and all. Nor had Chauncey Dike forgotten the scalp of the brave who leaped at him out of the briers at Neowee.

Polly Ann was radiant in a white linen gown, woven and sewed by her own hands. It was not such a gown as Mrs. Temple, Nick's mother, would have worn, and yet she was to me an hundred times more beautiful than that lady in all her silks. Peeping out from under it were the little blue-beaded moccasins which Tom himself had brought across the mountains in the bosom of his hunting shirt. Polly Ann was radiant, and yet at times so rapturously shy that when the preacher announced himself ready to tie the knot she ran into the house and hid in the cupboard — for Polly Ann was a child of nature. Thence, coloring like a wild rose, she was dragged by a boisterous bevy of girls in linsey-woolsey to the spreading maple of the forest that stood on the high bank over the stream. The assembly fell solemn, and not a sound was heard save the breathing of Nature in the heyday of her time. And though I was happy, the sobs rose in my throat. There stood Polly Ann, as white now as the bleached linen she wore, and Tom McChesney, tall and spare and broad, as strong a figure of a man as ever I laid eyes on. God had truly made that couple for wedlock in His leafy temple.

The deep-toned words of the preacher in prayer broke the stillness. They were made man and wife. And then began a day of merriment, of unrestraint, such as the backwoods alone knows. The feast was spread out in the long grass under the trees — sides of venison, bear meat, corn-pone fresh baked by Mrs. McChesney and Polly Ann herself, and all the vegetables in the patch. There was no stint, either, of maple beer and rum and "Black Betty," and toasts to the bride and groom amidst gusts of laughter "that they might populate Kaintuckee." And Polly Ann would have it that I should sit by her side under the maple.

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The fiddlers played, and there were foot races and shooting matches. Ay, and wrestling matches in the severe manner of the backwoods between the young bucks, more than one of which might have ended seriously were it not for the high humor of the crowd. Tom McChesney himself was in most of them, a hot favorite. By a trick he had learned in the Indian country he threw Chauncey Dike (no mean adversary) so hard that the backwoods dandy lay for a moment in sleep. Contrary to the custom of many, Tom was not in the habit of crowing on such occasions, nor did he even smile as he helped Chauncey to his feet. But Polly Ann knew, and I knew, that he was thinking of what Chauncey had said to her.

So the long summer afternoon wore away into twilight, and the sun fell behind the blue ridges we were to cross. Pine knots were lighted in the big room, the fiddlers set to again, and then came jigs and three and four handed reels that made the puncheons rattle, — chicken-flutter and cut-the-buckle, — and Polly Ann was the leader now, the young men flinging the girls from fireplace to window in the reels, and back again; and when, panting and perspiring, the lass was too tired to stand longer, she dropped into the hospitable lap of the nearest buck who was perched on the bench along the wall awaiting his chance. For so it went in the backwoods in those days, and long after, and no harm in it that ever I could see.

Well, suddenly, as if by concert, the music stopped, and a shout of laughter rang under the beams as Polly Ann flew out of the door with the girls after her, as swift of foot as she. They dragged her, a struggling captive, to the bride-chamber which made the other end of the house, and when they emerged, blushing and giggling and subdued, the fun began with Tom McChesney. He gave the young men a pretty fight indeed, and long before they had him conquered the elder guests had made their escape through door and window.

All night the reels and jigs went on, and the feasting and drinking too. In the fine rain that came at dawn to hide the crests, the company rode wearily homeward through the notches.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NOLLICHUCKY TRACE

Some to endure, and many to quail,
Some to conquer, and many to fail,
Toiling over the Wilderness Trail.

As long as I live I shall never forget the morning we started on our journey across the Blue Wall. Before the sun chased away the filmy veil of mist from the brooks in the valley, the McChesneys, father, mother, and children, were gathered to see us depart. And as they helped us to tighten the packsaddles Tom himself had made from chosen tree-forks, they did not cease lamenting that we were going to certain death. Our scrawny horses splashed across the stream, and we turned to see a gaunt and lonely figure standing apart against the sun, stern and sorrowful. We waved our hands, and set our faces towards Kaintuckee.

Tom walked ahead, rifle on shoulder, then Polly Ann; and lastly I drove the two shaggy ponies, the instruments of husbandry we had been able to gather awry on their packs, — a scythe, a spade, and a hoe. I triumphantly carried the axe.

It was not long before we were in the wilderness, shut in by mountain crags, and presently Polly Ann forgot her sorrows in the perils of the trace. Choked by briers and grapevines, blocked by sliding stones and earth, it rose and rose through the heat and burden of the day until it lost itself in the open heights. As the sun was wearing down to the western ridges the mischievous sorrel mare turned her pack on a sapling, and one of the precious bags burst. In an instant we were on our knees gathering the golden meal in our hands. Polly Ann baked

journeycakes on a hot stone from what we saved under the shiny ivy leaves, and scarce had I spancelled the horses ere Tom returned with a fat turkey he had shot.

"Was there ever sech a wedding journey!" said Polly Ann, as we sat about the fire, for the mountain air was chill. "And Tom and Davy as grave as parsons. Ye'd guess one of you was Rutherford himself, and the other Mr. Boone."

No wonder he was grave. I little realized then the task he had set himself, to pilot a woman and a lad into a country haunted by frenzied savages, when single men feared to go this season. But now he smiled, and patted Polly Ann's brown hand.

"It's one of yer own choosing, lass," said he.

"Of my own choosing!" cried she. "Come, Davy, we'll go back to Grandpa."

Tom grinned.

"I reckon the redskins won't bother us till we git by the Nollichucky and Watauga settlements," he said.

"The redskins!" said Polly Ann, indignant; "I reckon if one of 'em did git me he'd kiss me once in a while."

Whereupon Tom, looking more sheepish still, tried to kiss her, and failed ignominiously, for she vanished into the dark woods.

"If a redskin got you here," said Tom, when she had slipped back, "he'd fetch you to Nick-a-jack Cave."

"What's that?" she demanded.

"Where all the red and white and yellow scalawags over the mountains is gathered," he answered. And he told of a deep gorge between towering mountains where a great river cried angrily, of a black cave out of which a black stream ran, where a man could paddle a dugout for miles into the rock. The river was the Tennessee, and the place the resort of the Chickamauga bandits, pirates of the mountains, outcasts of all nations. And Dragging Canoe was their chief.

It was on the whole a merry journey, the first part of it, if a rough one. Often Polly Ann would draw me to her and whisper: "We'll hold out, Davy. He'll never

know." When the truth was that the big fellow was going at half his pace on our account. He told us there was no fear of redskins here, yet, when the scream of a painter or the hoot of an owl stirred me from my exhausted slumber, I caught sight of him with his back to a tree, staring into the forest, his rifle at his side. The day was dawning.

"Turn about's fair," I expostulated.

"Ye'll need yere sleep, Davy," said he, "or ye'll never grow any bigger."

"I thought Kaintuckee was to the west," I said, "and you're making north." For I had observed him day after day. We had left the trails. Sometimes he climbed a tree, and again he sent me to the upper branches, whence I surveyed a sea of tree-tops waving in the wind, and looked onward to where a green velvet hollow lay nestling on the western side of a saddle-backed ridge.

"North!" said Tom to Polly Ann, laughing. "The little devil will beat me at woodcraft soon. Ay, north, Davy. I'm hunting for the Nollichucky Trace that leads to the Watauga settlement."

It was wonderful to me how he chose his way through the mountains. Once in a while we caught sight of a yellow blaze in a tree, made by himself scarce a month gone, when he came southward alone to fetch Polly Ann. Again, the tired roan shied back from the bleached bones of a traveller, picked clean by wolves. At sundown, when we loosed our exhausted horses to graze on the wet grass by the streams, Tom would go off to look for a deer or turkey, and often not come back to us until long after darkness had fallen.

"Davy'll take care of you, Polly Ann," he would say as he left us.

And she would smile at him bravely and say, "I reckon I kin look out for Davy awhile yet."

But when he was gone, and the crooning stillness set in, broken only by the many sounds of the night, we would sit huddled together by the fire. It was dread for him she felt, not for herself. And in both our minds rose red images of hideous foes skulking behind his brave

form as he trod the forest floor. Polly Ann was not the woman to whimper.

And yet I have but dim recollections of this journey. It was no hardship to a lad brought up in woodcraft. Fear of the Indians, like a dog shivering with the cold, was a deadened pain on the border.

Strangely enough it was I who chanced upon the Nollichucky Trace, which follows the meanderings of that river northward through the great Smoky Mountains. It was made long ago by the Southern Indians as they threaded their way to the Hunting Lands of Kaintuckee, and shared now by Indian traders. The path was redolent with odors, and bright with mountain shrubs and flowers,— the pink laurel bush, the shining rhododendron, and the grape and plum and wild crab. The clear notes of the mountain birds were in our ears by day, and the music of the water falling over the ledges, mingled with that of the leaves rustling in the wind, lulled us to sleep at night. High above us, as we descended, the gap, from naked crag to timber-covered ridge, was spanned by the eagle's flight. And virgin valleys, where future generations were to be born, spread out and narrowed again, — valleys with a deep carpet of cane and grass, where the deer and elk and bear fed unmolested.

It was perchance the next evening that my eyes fell upon a sight which is one of the wonders of my boyish memories. The trail slipped to the edge of a precipice, and at our feet the valley widened. Planted amidst giant trees, on a shining green lawn that ran down to the racing Nollichucky was the strangest house it has ever been my lot to see — of no shape, of huge size, and built of logs, one wing hitched to another by "dog alleys" (as we called them); and from its wide stone chimneys the pearly smoke rose upward in the still air through the poplar branches. Beyond it a setting sun gilded the cornfields, and horses and cattle dotted the pastures. We stood for a while staring at this oasis in the wilderness, and to my boyish fancy it was a fitting introduction to a delectable land.

"Glory be to heaven!" exclaimed Polly Ann.

"It's Nollichucky Jack's house," said Tom.

"And who may he be?" said she.

"Who may he be!" cried Tom; "Captain John Sevier, king of the border, and I reckon the best man to sweep out redskins in the Watauga settlements."

"Do you know him?" said she.

"I was chose as one of his scouts when we fired the Cherokee hill towns last summer," said Tom, with pride. "Thar was blood and thunder for ye! We went down the Great War-path which lies below us, and when we was through there wasn't a corn-shuck or a wigwam or a war post left. We didn't harm the squaws nor the children, but there warn't no prisoners took. When Nollichucky Jack strikes I reckon it's more like a thunderbolt nor anything else."

"Do you think he's at home, Tom?" I asked, fearful that I should not see this celebrated person.

"We'll soon l'arn," said he, as we descended. "I heerd he was agoin' to punish them Chickamauga robbers by Nick-a-jack."

Just then we heard a prodigious barking, and a dozen hounds came charging down the path at our horses' legs, the roan shying into the truck patch. A man's voice, deep, clear, compelling, was heard calling: —

"Vi! Flora! Ripper!"

I saw him coming from the porch of the house, a tall, slim figure in a hunting shirt—that fitted to perfection—and cavalry boots. His face, his carriage, his quick movement and stride filled my notion of a hero, and my instinct told me he was a gentleman born.

"Why, bless my soul, it's Tom McChesney!" he cried, ten paces away, while Tom grinned with pleasure at the recognition. "But what have you here?"

"A wife," said Tom, standing on one foot.

Captain Sevier fixed his dark blue eyes on Polly Ann with approbation, and he bowed to her very gracefully.

"Where are you going, Ma'am, may I ask?" he said.

"To Kaintuckee," said Polly Ann.

"To Kaintuckee!" cried Captain Sevier, turning to

Tom. "Egad, then, you've no right to a wife, — and to such a wife," and he glanced again at Polly Ann. "Why, McChesney, you never struck me as a rash man. Have you lost your senses, to take a woman into Kentucky this year?"

"So the forts be still in trouble?" said Tom.

"Trouble?" cried Mr. Sevier, with a quick fling of his whip at an unruly hound, "Harrodstown, Boonesboro, Logan's Fort at St. Asaph's, — they don't dare stick their noses outside the stockades. The Indians have swarmed into Kentucky like red ants, I tell you. Ten days ago, when I was in the Holston settlements, Major Ben Logan came in. His fort had been shut up since May, they were out of powder and lead, and somebody had to come. How did he come? As the wolf lopes, nay, as the crow flies over crag and ford, Cumberland, Clinch, and all, forty miles a day for five days, and never saw a trace — for the war parties were watching the Wilderness Road." And he swung again towards Polly Ann. "You'll not go to Kaintuckee, ma'am; you'll stay here with us until the redskins are beaten off there. He may go if he likes."

"I reckon we didn't come this far to give out, Captain Sevier," said she.

"You don't look to be the kind to give out, Mrs. McChesney," said he. "And yet it may not be a matter of giving out," he added more soberly. This mixture of heartiness and gravity seemed to sit well on him. "Surely you have been enterprising, Tom. Where in the name of the Continental Congress did you get the lad?"

"I married him along with Polly Ann," said Tom. "That was the bargain, and I reckon he was worth it."

"I'd take a dozen to get her," declared Mr. Sevier, while Polly Ann blushed. "Well, well, supper's waiting us, and cider and applejack, for we don't get a wedding party every day. Some gentlemen are here whose word may have more weight and whose attractions may be greater than mine."

He whistled to a negro lad, who took our horses, and led us through the court-yard and the house to the lawn

at the far side of it. A rude table was set there under a great tree, and around it three gentlemen were talking. My memory of all of them is more vivid than it might be were their names not household words in the Western country. Captain Sevier startled them.

"My friends," said he, "if you have despatches for Kaintuckee, I pray you get them ready over night."

They looked up at him, one sternly, the other two gravely.

"What the devil do you mean, Sevier?" said the stern one.

"That my friend, Tom McChesney, is going there with his wife, unless we can stop him," said Sevier.

"Stop him!" thundered the stern gentleman, kicking back his chair and straightening up to what seemed to me a colossal height. I stared at him, boylike. He had long, iron-gray hair and a creased, fleshy face and sunken eyes. He looked as if he might stop anybody as he turned upon Tom. "Who the devil is this Tom McChesney?" he demanded.

Sevier laughed.

"The best scout I ever laid eyes on," said he. "A deadly man with a Deckard, an unerring man at choosing a wife" (and he bowed to the reddening Polly Ann), "and a fool to run the risk of losing her."

"Tut, tut," said the iron gentleman, who was the famous Captain Evan Shelby of King's Meadows, "he'll leave her here in our settlements while he helps us fight Dragging Canoe and his Chickamauga pirates."

"If he leaves me," said Polly Ann, her eyes flashing, "that's an end to the bargain. He'll never find me more."

Captain Sevier laughed again.

"There's spirit for you," he cried, slapping his whip against his boot.

At this another gentleman stood up, a younger counterpart of the first, only he towered higher and his shoulders were broader. He had a big-featured face, and pleasant eyes—that twinkled now—sunken in, with fleshy creases at the corners.

"Tom McChesney," said he, "don't mind my father. If any man besides Logan can get inside the forts, you can. Do you remember me?"

"I reckon I do, Mr. Isaac Shelby," said Tom, putting a big hand into Mr. Shelby's bigger one. "I reckon I won't soon forget how you stepped out of ranks and tuk command when the boys was runnin', and turned the tide."

He looked like the man to step out of ranks and take command.

"Pish!" said Mr. Isaac Shelby, blushing like a girl; "where would I have been if you and Moore and Findley and the rest hadn't stood 'em off till we turned round?"

By this time the third gentleman had drawn my attention. Not by anything he said, for he remained silent, sitting with his dark brown head bent forward, quietly gazing at the scene from under his brows. The instant he spoke they turned towards him. He was perhaps forty, and broad-shouldered, not so tall as Mr. Sevier.

"Why do you go to Kaintuckee, McChesney?" he asked.

"I give my word to Mr. Harrod and Mr. Clark to come back, Mr. Robertson," said Tom.

"And the wife? If you take her, you run a great risk of losing her."

"And if he leaves me," said Polly Ann, flinging her head, "he will lose me sure."

The others laughed, but Mr. Robertson merely smiled.

"Faith," cried Captain Sevier, "if those I met coming back helter-skelter over the Wilderness Trace had been of that stripe, they'd have more men in the forts now."

With that the Captain called for supper to be served where we sat. He was a widower, with lads somewhere near my own age, and I recall being shown about the place by them. And later, when the fireflies glowed and the Nollichucky sang in the darkness, we listened to the talk of the war of the year gone by. I needed not to be told that before me were the renowned leaders of the Watauga settlements. My hero worship cried it aloud within me. These captains dwelt on the border-land of mystery, con-

quered the wilderness, and drove before them its savage tribes by their might. When they spoke of the Cherokees and told how that same Stuart — the companion of Cameron — was urging them to war against our people, a fierce anger blazed within me. For the Cherokees had killed my father.

I remember the men, — scarcely what they said: Evan Shelby's words, like heavy blows on an anvil; Isaac Shelby's, none the less forceful; James Robertson compelling his listeners by some strange power. He was perchance the strongest man there, though none of us guessed, after ruling that region, that he was to repeat untold hardships to found and rear another settlement farther west. But best I loved to hear Captain Sevier, whose talk lacked not force, but had a daring, a humor, a lightness of touch, that seemed more in keeping with that world I had left behind me in Charlestown. Him I loved, and at length I solved the puzzle. To me he was Nick Temple grown to manhood.

I slept in the room with Captain Sevier's boys, and one window of it was of paper smeared with bear's grease, through which the sunlight came all bleared and yellow in the morning. I had a boy's interest in affairs, and I remember being told that the gentlemen were met here to discuss the treaty between themselves and the great Oconostota, chief of the Cherokees, and also to consider the policy of punishing once for all Dragging Canoe and his bandits at Chickamauga.

As we sat at breakfast under the trees, these gentlemen generously dropped their own business to counsel Tom, and I observed with pride that he had gained their regard during the last year's war. Shelby's threats and Robertson's warnings and Sevier's exhortations having no effect upon his determination to proceed to Kentucky, they began to advise him how to go, and he sat silent while they talked. And finally, when they asked him, he spoke of making through Carter's Valley for Cumberland Gap and the Wilderness Trail.

"Egad," cried Captain Sevier, "I have so many times

found the boldest plan the safest that I have become a coward that way. What do you say to it, Mr. Robertson?"

Mr. Robertson leaned his square shoulders over the table.

"He may fall in with a party going over," he answered, without looking up.

Polly Ann looked at Tom as if to say that the whole Continental Army could not give her as much protection.

We left that hospitable place about nine o'clock, Mr. Robertson having written a letter to Colonel Daniel Boone, — shut up in the fort at Boonesboro, — should we be so fortunate as to reach Kaintuckee: and another to a young gentleman by the name of George Rogers Clark, apparently a leader there. Captain Sevier bowed over Polly Ann's hand as if she were a great lady, and wished her a happy honeymoon, and me he patted on the head and called a brave lad. And soon we had passed beyond the corn-field into the Wilderness again.

Our way was down the Nollichucky, past the great bend of it below Lick Creek, and so to the Great War-path, the trail by which countless parties of red marauders had travelled north and south. It led, indeed, northeast between the mountain ranges. Although we kept a watch by day and night, we saw no sign of Dragging Canoe or his men, and at length we forded the Holston and came to the scattered settlement in Carter's Valley.

I have since racked my brain to remember at whose cabin we stopped there. He was a rough backwoodsman with a wife and a horde of children. But I recall that a great rain came out of the mountains and down the valley. We were counting over the powder gourds in our packs, when there burst in at the door as wild a man as has ever been my lot to see. His brown beard was grown like a bramble patch, his eye had a violet light, and his hunting shirt was in tatters. He was thin to gauntness, ate ravenously of the food that was set before him, and throwing off his soaked moccasins, he spread his scalded feet to the blaze, and the steaming odor of drying leather filled the room.

"Whar be ye from?" asked Tom.

For answer the man bared his arm, then his shoulder, and two angry scars, long and red, revealed themselves, and around his wrists were deep gouges where he had been bound.

"They killed Sue," he cried, "sculped her afore my very eyes. And they chopped my boy outen the hickory withes and carried him to the Creek Nation. At a place where there was a standin' stone I broke loose from three of 'em and come here over the mountains, and I ain't had nothin', stranger, but berries and chainey brier-root for ten days. God damn 'em!" he cried, standing up and tottering with the pain in his feet, "if I can get a Deckard —"

"Will you go back?" said Tom.

"Go back!" he shouted, "I'll go back and fight 'em while I have blood in my body."

He fell into a bunk, but his sorrow haunted him even in his troubled sleep, and his moans awed us as we listened. The next day he told us his story with more calmness. It was horrible indeed, and might well have frightened a less courageous woman than Polly Ann. Imploring her not to go, he became wild again, and brought tears to her eyes when he spoke of his own wife. "They tomahawked her, ma'am, because she could not walk, and the baby beside her, and I standing by with my arms tied."

As long as I live I shall never forget that scene, and how Tom pleaded with Polly Ann to stay behind, but she would not listen to him.

"You're going, Tom?" she said.

"Yes," he answered, turning away, "I gave 'em my word."

"And your word to me?" said Polly Ann.

He did not answer.

We fixed on a Saturday to start, to give the horses time to rest, and in the hope that we might hear of some relief party going over the Gap. On Thursday Tom made a trip to the store in the valley, and came back with a Deckard rifle he had bought for the stranger, whose name

was Weldon. There was no news from Kaintuckee, but the Carter's Valley settlers seemed to think that matters were better there. It was that same night, I believe, that two men arrived from Fort Chiswell. One, whose name was Cutcheon, was a little man with a short forehead and a bad eye, and he wore a weather-beaten blue coat of military cut. The second was a big, light-colored, fleshy man, and a loud talker. He wore a hunting shirt and leggings. They were both the worse for rum they had had on the road, the big man talking very loud and boastfully.

"Afeard to go to Kaintuckee!" said he. "I've met a parcel o' cowards on the road, turned back. There ain't nothin' to be afeard of, eh, stranger?" he added, to Tom, who paid no manner of attention to him. The small man scarce opened his mouth, but sat with his head bowed forward on his breast when he was not drinking. We passed a dismal, crowded night in the room with such companions. When they heard that we were to go over the mountains, nothing would satisfy the big man but to go with us.

"Come, stranger," said he to Tom, "two good rifles such as we is ain't to be throwed away."

"Why do you want to go over?" asked Tom. "Be ye a Tory?" he demanded suspiciously.

"Why do you go over?" retorted Riley, for that was his name. "I reckon I'm no more of a Tory than you."

"Whar did ye come from?" said Tom.

"Chiswell's mines, taking out lead for the army o' Congress. But there ain't excitement enough in it."

"And you?" said Tom, turning to Cutcheon and eying his military coat.

"I got tired of their damned discipline," the man answered surlily. He was a deserter.

"Look you," said Tom, sternly, "if you come, what I say is law."

Such was the sacrifice we were put to by our need of company. But in those days a man was a man, and scarce

enough on the Wilderness Trail in that year of '77. So we started away from Carter's Valley on a bright Saturday morning, the grass glistening after a week's rain, the road sodden, and the smell of the summer earth heavy. Tom and Weldon walked ahead, driving the two horses, followed by Cutcheon, his head dropped between his shoulders. The big man, Riley, regaled Polly Ann.

"My pluck is," said he, "my pluck is to give a redskin no chance. Shoot 'em down like hogs. It takes a good un to stalk me, Ma'am. Up on the Kanawha I've had hand-to-hand fights with 'em, and made 'em cry quits."

"Law!" exclaimed Polly Ann, nudging me, "it was a lucky thing we run into you in the valley."

But presently we left the road and took a mountain trail,—as stiff a climb as we had yet had. Polly Ann went up it like a bird, talking all the while to Riley, who blew like a bellows. For once he was silent.

We spent two, perchance three, days climbing and descending and fording. At night Tom would suffer none to watch save Weldon and himself, not trusting Riley or Cutcheon. And the rascals were well content to sleep. At length we came to a cabin on a creek, the corn between the stumps around it choked with weeds, and no sign of smoke in the chimney. Behind it slanted up, in giant steps, a forest-clad hill of a thousand feet, and in front of it the stream was dammed and lined with cane.

"Who keeps house?" cried Tom, at the threshold.

He pushed back the door, fashioned in one great slab from a forest tree. His welcome was an angry whir, and a huge yellow rattler lay coiled within, his head reared to strike. Polly Ann leaned back.

"Mercy," she cried, "that's a bad sign."

But Tom killed the snake, and we made ready to use the cabin that night and the next day. For the horses were to be rested and meat was to be got, as we could not use our guns so freely on the far side of Cumberland Gap. In the morning, before he and Weldon left, Tom took me around the end of the cabin.

"Davy," said he, "I don't trust these rascals. Kin you shoot a pistol?"

I reckoned I could.

He had taken one out of the pack he had got from Captain Sevier and pushed it between the logs where the clay had fallen out. "If they try anything," said he, "shoot 'em. And don't be afeard of killing 'em." He patted me on the back, and went off up the slope with Weldon. Polly Ann and I stood watching them until they were out of sight.

About eleven o'clock Riley and Cutcheon moved off to the edge of a cane-brake near the water, and sat there for a while, talking in low tones. The horses were belled and spancelled near by, feeding on the cane and wild grass, and Polly Ann was cooking journey-cakes on a stone.

"What makes you so sober, Davy?" she said.

I didn't answer.

"Davy," she cried, "be happy while you're young. 'Tis a fine day, and Kaintuckee's over yonder." She picked up her skirts and sang: —

> "First upon the heeltap,
> Then upon the toe."

The men by the cane-brake turned and came towards us.

"Ye're happy to-day, Mis' McChesney," said Riley.

"Why shouldn't I be?" said Polly Ann; "we're all a-goin' to Kaintuckee."

"We're a-goin' back to Cyarter's Valley," said Riley, in his blustering way. "This here ain't as excitin' as I thought. I reckon there ain't no redskins nohow."

"What!" cried Polly Ann, in loud scorn, "ye're a-goin' to desert? There'll be redskins enough by and by, I'll warrant ye."

"How'd you like to come along of us," says Riley; "that ain't any place for wimmen, over yonder."

"Along of you!" cried Polly Ann, with flashing eyes. "Do you hear that, Davy?"

I did. Meanwhile the man Cutcheon was slowly walking towards her. It took scarce a second for me to make up my mind. I slipped around the corner of the house, seized the pistol, primed it with a trembling hand, and came back to behold Polly Ann, with flaming cheeks, facing them. They did not so much as glance at me. Riley held a little back of the two, being the coward. But Cutcheon stood ready, like a wolf.

I did not wait for him to spring, but, taking the best aim I could with my two hands, fired. With a curse that echoed in the crags, he threw up his arms and fell forward, writhing, on the turf.

"Run for the cabin, Polly Ann," I shouted, "and bar the door."

There was no need. For an instant Riley wavered, and then fled to the cane.

Polly Ann and I went to the man on the ground, and turned him over. His eyes slid upwards. There was a bloody froth on his lips.

"Davy!" cried she, awestricken, "Davy, ye've killed him!"

I grew dizzy and sick at the thought, but she caught me and held me to her. Presently we sat down on the door log, gazing at the corpse. Then I began to reflect, and took out my powder gourd and loaded the pistol.

"What are ye a-doing?" she said.

"In case the other one comes back," said I.

"Pooh," said Polly Ann, "*he'll* not come back." Which was true. I have never laid eyes on Riley to this day.

"I reckon we'd better fetch it out of the sun," said she, after a while. And so we dragged it under an oak, covered the face, and left it.

He was the first man I ever killed, and the business by no means came natural to me. And that day the journey-cakes which Polly Ann had made were untasted by us both. The afternoon dragged interminably. Try as we would, we could not get out of our minds the Thing that lay under the oak.

It was near sundown when Tom and Weldon appeared

on the mountain side carrying a buck between them. Tom glanced from one to the other of us keenly. He was very quick to divine.

"Whar be they?" said he.

"Show him, Davy," said Polly Ann.

I took him over to the oak, and Polly Ann told him the story. He gave me one look, I remember, and there was more of gratitude in it than in a thousand words. Then he seized a piece of cold cake from the stone.

"Which trace did he take?" he demanded of me.

But Polly Ann hung on his shoulder.

"Tom, Tom!" she cried, "you beant goin' to leave us again. Tom, he'll die in the wilderness, and we must git to Kaintuckee."

* * * * * * *

The next vivid thing in my memory is the view of the last barrier Nature had reared between us and the delectable country. It stood like a lion at the gateway, and for some minutes we gazed at it in terror from Powell's Valley below. How many thousands have looked at it with sinking hearts! How many weaklings has its frown turned back! There seemed to be engraved upon it the dark history of the dark and bloody land beyond. Nothing in this life worth having is won for the asking; and the best is fought for, and bled for, and died for. Written, too, upon that towering wall of white rock, in the handwriting of God Himself, is the history of the indomitable Race to which we belong.

For fifty miles we travelled under it, towards the Gap, our eyes drawn to it by a resistless fascination. The sun went over it early in the day, as though glad to leave the place, and after that a dark scowl would settle there. At night we felt its presence, like a curse. Even Polly Ann was silent. And she had need to be now. When it was necessary, we talked in low tones, and the bell-clappers on the horses were not loosed at night. It was here, but four years gone, that Daniel Boone's family was attacked, and his son killed by the Indians.

We passed, from time to time, deserted cabins and camps, and some places that might once have been called settlements: Elk Garden, where the pioneers of the last four years had been wont to lay in a simple supply of seed corn and Irish potatoes; and the spot where Henderson and his company had camped on the way to establish Boonesboro two years before. And at last we struck the trace that mounted upward to the Gateway itself.

CHAPTER IX

ON THE WILDERNESS TRAIL

And now we had our hands upon the latch, and God alone knew what was behind the gate. Toil, with a certainty, but our lives had known it. Death, perchance. But Death had been near to all of us, and his presence did not frighten. As we climbed towards the Gap, I recalled with strange aptness a quaint saying of my father's that Kaintuckee was the Garden of Eden, and that men were being justly punished with blood for their presumption.

As if to crown that judgment, the day was dark and lowering, with showers of rain from time to time. And when we spoke, — Polly Ann and I, — it was in whispers. The trace was very narrow, with Daniel Boone's blazes, two years old, upon the trees; but the way was not over steep. Cumberland Mountain was as silent and deserted as when the first man had known it.

Alas, for the vanity of human presage! We gained the top, and entered unmolested. No Eden suddenly dazzled our eye, no splendor burst upon it. Nothing told us, as we halted in our weariness, that we had reached the Promised Land. The mists weighed heavily on the evergreens of the slopes and hid the ridges, and we passed that night in cold discomfort. It was the first of many without a fire.

The next day brought us to the Cumberland, tawny and swollen from the rains, and here we had to stop to fell trees to make a raft on which to ferry over our packs. We bound the logs together with grapevines, and as we worked my imagination painted for me many a red face peering from the bushes on the farther shore. And when we got into the river and were caught and spun by the

hurrying stream, I hearkened for a shot from the farther bank. While Polly Ann and I were scrambling to get the raft landed, Tom and Weldon swam over with the horses. And so we lay the second night dolefully in the rain. But not so much as a whimper escaped from Polly Ann. I have often told her since that the sorest trial she had was the guard she kept on her tongue, — a hardship indeed for one of Irish inheritance. Many a pull had she lightened for us by a flash of humor.

The next morning the sun relented, and the wine of his dawn was wine indeed to our flagging hopes. Going down to wash at the river's brink, I heard a movement in the cane, and stood frozen and staring until a great, bearded head, black as tar, was thrust out between the stalks and looked at me with blinking red eyes. The next step revealed the hump of the beast, and the next his tasselled tail lashing his dirty brown quarters. I did not tarry longer, but ran to tell Tom. He made bold to risk a shot and light a fire, and thus we had buffalo meat for some days after.

We were still in the mountains. The trail led down the river for a bit through the worst of canebrakes, and every now and again we stopped while Tom and Weldon scouted. Once the roan mare made a dash through the brake, and, though Polly Ann burst through one way to head her off and I another, we reached the bank of Richland Creek in time to see her nose and the top of her pack above the brown water. There was nothing for it but to swim after her, which I did, and caught her quietly feeding in the cane on the other side. By great good fortune the other horse bore the powder.

"Drat you, Nancy," said Polly Ann to the mare, as she handed me my clothes, "I'd sooner carry the pack myself than be bothered with you."

"Hush," said I, "the redskins will get us."

Polly Ann regarded me scornfully as I stood bedraggled before her.

"Redskins!" she cried. "Nonsense! I reckon it's all talk about redskins."

But we had scarce caught up ere we saw Tom standing rigid with his hand raised. Before him, on a mound bared of cane, were the charred remains of a fire. The sight of them transformed Weldon. His eyes glared again, even as when we had first seen him, curses escaped under his breath, and he would have darted into the cane had not Tom seized him sternly by the shoulder. As for me, my heart hammered against my ribs, and I grew sick with listening. It was at that instant that my admiration for Tom McChesney burst bounds, and that I got some real inkling of what woodcraft might be. Stepping silently between the tree trunks, his eyes bent on the leafy loam, he found a footprint here and another there, and suddenly he went into the cane with a sign to us to remain. It seemed an age before he returned. Then he began to rake the ashes, and, suddenly bending down, seized something in them, — the broken bowl of an Indian pipe.

"Shawnees!" he said; "I reckoned so." It was at length the beseeching in Polly Ann's eyes that he answered.

"A war party — tracks three days old. They took poplar."

To take poplar was our backwoods expression for embarking in a canoe, the dugouts being fashioned from the great poplar trees.

I did not reflect then, as I have since and often, how great was the knowledge and resource Tom practised that day. Our feeling for him (Polly Ann's and mine) fell little short of worship. In company ill at ease, in the forest he became silent and masterful — an unerring woodsman, capable of meeting the Indian on his own footing. And, strangest thought of all, he and many I could name who went into Kentucky, had escaped, by a kind of strange fate, being born in the north of Ireland. This was so of Andrew Jackson himself.

The rest of the day he led us in silence down the trace, his eye alert to penetrate every corner of the forest, his hand near the trigger of his long Deckard. I followed in

boylike imitation, searching every thicket for alien form and color, and yearning for stature and responsibility. As for poor Weldon, he would stride for hours at a time with eyes fixed ahead, a wild figure, — ragged and fringed. And we knew that the soul within him was torn with thoughts of his dead wife and of his child in captivity. Again, when the trance left him, he was an addition to our little party not to be despised.

At dark Polly Ann and I carried the packs across a creek on a fallen tree, she taking one end and I the other. We camped there, where the loam was trampled and torn by countless herds of bison, and had only parched corn and the remains of a buffalo steak for supper, as the meal was mouldy from its wetting, and running low. When Weldon had gone a little distance up the creek to scout, Tom relented from the sternness which his vigilance imposed and came and sat down on a log beside Polly Ann and me.

"'Tis a hard journey, little girl," he said, patting her; "I reckon I done wrong to fetch you."

I can see him now, as the twilight settled down over the wilderness, his honest face red and freckled, but aglow with the tenderness it had hidden during the day, one big hand enfolding hers, and the other on my shoulder.

"Hark, Davy!" said Polly Ann, "he's fair tired of us already. Davy, take me back."

"Hush, Polly Ann," he answered, delighted at her raillery. "But I've a word to say to you. If we come on to the redskins, you and Davy make for the cane as hard as you kin kilter. Keep out of sight."

"As hard as we kin kilter!" exclaimed Polly Ann, indignantly. "I reckon not, Tom McChesney. Davy taught me to shoot long ago, afore you made up your mind to come back from Kaintuckee."

Tom chuckled. "So Davy taught you to shoot," he said, and checked himself. "He ain't such a bad one with a pistol," — and he patted me, — "but I allow ye'd better hunt kiver just the same. And if they ketch ye,

Polly Ann, just you go along and pretend to be happy, and tear off a snatch of your dress now and then, if you get a chance. It wouldn't take me but a little time to run into Harrodstown or Boone's Station from here, and fetch a party to follow ye."

Two days went by,—two days of strain in sunlight, and of watching and fitful sleep in darkness. But the Wilderness Trail was deserted. Here and there a lean-to —silent remnant of the year gone by—spoke of the little bands of emigrants which had once made their way so cheerfully to the new country. Again it was a child's doll, the rags of it beaten by the weather to a rusty hue. Every hour that we progressed seemed to justify the sagacity and boldness of Tom's plan, nor did it appear to have entered a painted skull that a white man would have the hardihood to try the trail this year. There were neither signs nor sounds save Nature's own, the hoot of the wood-owl, the distant bark of a mountain wolf, the whir of a partridge as she left her brood. At length we could stand no more the repression that silence and watching put upon us, and when a rotten bank gave way and flung Polly Ann and the sorrel mare into a creek, even Weldon smiled as we pulled her, bedraggled and laughing, from the muddy water. This was after we had ferried the Rockcastle River.

Our trace rose and fell over height and valley, until we knew that we were come to a wonderland at last. We stood one evening on a spur as the setting sun flooded the natural park below us with a crystal light and, striking a tall sycamore, turned its green to gold. We were now on the hills whence the water ran down to nourish the fat land, and I could scarce believe that the garden spot on which our eyes feasted could be the scene of the blood and suffering of which we had heard. Here at last was the fairyland of my childhood, the country beyond the Blue Wall.

We went down the river that led into it, with awe, as though we were trespassers against God Himself,—as though He had made it too beautiful and too fruitful

for the toilers of this earth. And you who read this an hundred years hence may not believe the marvels of it to the pioneer, and in particular to one born and bred in the scanty, hard soil of the mountains. Nature had made it for her park, — ay, and scented it with her own perfumes. Giant trees, which had watched generations come and go, some of which mayhap had been saplings when the Norman came to England, grew in groves, — the gnarled and twisted oak, and that godsend to the settlers, the sugar-maple; the coffee tree with its drooping buds; the mulberry, the cherry, and the plum; the sassafras and the pawpaw; the poplar and the sycamore, slender maidens of the forest, garbed in daintier colors, — ay, and that resplendent brunette with the white flowers, the magnolia; and all underneath, in the green shade, enamelled banks which the birds themselves sought to rival.

At length, one afternoon, we came to the grove of wild apple trees so lovingly spoken of by emigrants as the Crab Orchard, and where formerly they had delighted to linger. The plain near by was flecked with the brown backs of feeding buffalo, but we dared not stop, and pressed on to find a camp in the forest. As we walked in the filtered sunlight we had a great fright, Polly Ann and I. Shrill, discordant cries suddenly burst from the branches above us, and a flock of strange, green birds flecked with red flew over our heads. Even Tom, intent upon the trail, turned and laughed at Polly Ann as she stood clutching me.

"Shucks," said he, "they're only paroquets."

We made our camp in a little dell where there was short green grass by the brookside and steep banks overgrown with brambles on either hand. Tom knew the place, and declared that we were within thirty miles of the station. A giant oak had blown down across the water, and, cutting out a few branches of this, we spread our blankets under it on the turf. Tethering our faithful beasts, and cutting a quantity of pea-vine for their night's food, we lay down to sleep, Tom taking the first watch.

I had the second, for Tom trusted me now, and glorying in that trust I was alert and vigilant. A shy moon peeped at me between the trees, and was fantastically reflected in the water. The creek rippled over the limestone, and an elk screamed in the forest far beyond. When at length I had called Weldon to take the third watch, I lay down with a sense of peace, soothed by the sweet odors of the night.

I awoke suddenly. I had been dreaming of Nick Temple and Temple Bow, and my father coming back to me there with a great gash in his shoulder like Weldon's. I lay for a moment dazed by the transition, staring through the gray light. Then I sat up, the soft stamping and snorting of the horses in my ears. The sorrel mare had her nose high, her tail twitching, but there was no other sound in the leafy wilderness. With a bound of returning sense I looked for Weldon. He had fallen asleep on the bank above, his body dropped across the trunk of the oak. I leaped on the trunk and made my way along it, stepping over him, until I reached and hid myself in the great roots of the tree on the bank above. The cold shiver of the dawn was in my body as I waited and listened. Should I wake Tom? The vast forest was silent, and yet in its shadowy depths my imagination drew moving forms. I hesitated.

The light grew: the boles of the trees came out, one by one, through the purple. The tangled mass down the creek took on a shade of green, and a faint breath came from the southward. The sorrel mare sniffed it, and stamped. Then silence again, — a long silence. Could it be that the cane moved in the thicket? Or had my eyes deceived me? I stared so hard that it seemed to rustle all over. Perhaps some deer were feeding there, for it was no unusual thing, when we rose in the morning, to hear the whistle of a startled doe near our camping ground. I was thoroughly frightened now, — and yet I had the speculative Scotch mind. The thicket was some one hundred and fifty yards above, and on the flooded lands at a bend. If there were Indians in it, they could not see the

sleeping forms of our party under me because of a bend in the stream. They might have seen me, though I had kept very still in the twisted roots of the oak, and now I was cramped. If Indians were there, they could determine our position well enough by the occasional stamping and snorting of the horses. And this made my fear more probable, for I had heard that horses and cattle often warned pioneers of the presence of redskins.

Another thing: if they were a small party, they would probably seek to surprise us by coming out of the cane into the creek bed above the bend, and stalk down the creek. If a large band, they would surround and overpower us. I drew the conclusion that it must be a small party — if a party at all. And I would have given a shot in the arm to be able to see over the banks of the creek. Finally I decided to awake Tom.

It was no easy matter to get down to where he was without being seen by eyes in the cane. I clung to the under branches of the oak, finally reached the shelving bank, and slid down slowly. I touched him on the shoulder. He awoke with a start, and by instinct seized the rifle lying beside him.

"What is it, Davy?" he whispered.

I told what had happened and my surmise. He glanced then at the restless horses and nodded, pointing up at the sleeping figure of Weldon, in full sight on the log. The Indians must have seen him.

Tom picked up the spare rifle.

"Davy," said he, "you stay here beside Polly Ann, behind the oak. You kin shoot with a rest; but don't shoot," said he, earnestly, "for God's sake don't shoot unless you're sure to kill."

I nodded. For a moment he looked at the face of Polly Ann, sleeping peacefully, and the fierce light faded from his eyes. He brushed her on the cheek and she awoke and smiled at him, trustfully, lovingly. He put his finger to his lips.

"Stay with Davy," he said. Turning to me, he added: "When you wake Weldon, wake him easy. So." He

put his hand in mine, and gradually tightened it. "Wake him that way, and he won't jump."

Polly Ann asked no questions. She looked at Tom, and her soul was in her face. She seized the pistol from the blanket. Then we watched him creeping down the creek on his belly, close to the bank. Next we moved behind the fallen tree, and I put my hand in Weldon's. He woke with a sigh, started, but we drew him down behind the log. Presently he climbed cautiously up the bank and took station in the muddy roots of the tree. Then we waited, watching Tom with a prayer in our hearts. Those who have not felt it know not the fearfulness of waiting for an Indian attack.

At last Tom reached the bend in the bank, beside some red-bud bushes, and there he stayed. A level shaft of light shot through the forest. The birds, twittering, awoke. A great hawk soared high in the blue over our heads. An hour passed. I had sighted the rifle among the yellow leaves of the fallen oak an hundred times. But Polly Ann looked not once to the right or left. Her eyes and her prayers followed the form of her husband.

Then, like the cracking of a great drover's whip, a shot rang out in the stillness, and my hands tightened over the rifle-stock. A piece of bark struck me in the face, and a dead leaf fluttered to the ground. Almost instantly there was another shot, and a blue wisp of smoke rose from the red-bud bushes, where Tom was. The horses whinnied, there was a rustle in the cane, and silence. Weldon bent over.

"My God!" he whispered hoarsely, "he hit one. Tom hit one."

I felt Polly Ann's hand on my face.

"Davy dear," she said, "are ye hurt?"

"No," said I, dazed, and wondering why Weldon had not been shot long ago as he slumbered. I was burning to climb the bank and ask him whether he had seen the Indian fall.

Again there was silence, — a silence even more awful than before. The sun crept higher, the magic of his rays

turning the creek from black to crystal, and the birds began to sing again. And still there was no sign of the treacherous enemy that lurked about us. Could Tom get back? I glanced at Polly Ann. The same question was written in her yearning eyes, staring at the spot where the gray of his hunting shirt showed through the bushes at the bend. Suddenly her hand tightened on mine. The hunting shirt was gone!

After that, in the intervals when my terror left me, I tried to speculate upon the plan of the savages. Their own numbers could not be great, and yet they must have known from our trace how few we were. Scanning the ground, I noted that the forest was fairly clean of undergrowth on both sides of us. Below, the stream ran straight, but there were growths of cane and briers. Looking up, I saw Weldon faced about. It was the obvious move.

But where had Tom gone?

Next my eye was caught by a little run fringed with bushes that curved around the cane near the bend. I traced its course, unconsciously, bit by bit, until it reached the edge of a bank not fifty feet away.

All at once my breath left me. Through the tangle of bramble stems at the mouth of the run, above naked brown shoulders there glared at me, hideously streaked with red, a face. Had my fancy lied? I stared again until my eyes were blurred, now tortured by doubt, now so completely convinced that my fingers almost released the trigger, — for I had thrown the sights into line over the tree. I know not to this day whether I shot from determination or nervousness. My shoulder bruised by the kick, the smoke like a veil before my face, it was some moments ere I knew that the air was full of whistling bullets; and then the gun was torn from my hands, and I saw Polly Ann ramming in a new charge.

"The pistol, Davy," she cried.

One torture was over, another on. Crack after crack sounded from the forest — from here and there and everywhere, it seemed — and with a song that like a hurtling

insect ran the scale of notes, the bullets buried themselves in the trunk of our oak with a chug. Once in a while I heard Weldon's answering shot, but I remembered my promise to Tom not to waste powder unless I were sure. The agony was the breathing space we had while they crept nearer. Then we thought of Tom, and I dared not glance at Polly Ann for fear that the sight of her face would unnerve me.

Then a longing to kill seized me, a longing so strange and fierce that I could scarce be still. I know now that it comes in battle to all men, and with intensity to the hunted, and it explained to me more clearly what followed. I fairly prayed for the sight of a painted form, and time after time my fancy tricked me into the notion that I had one. And even as I searched the brambles at the top of the run a puff of smoke rose out of them, a bullet burying itself in the roots near Weldon, who fired in return. I say that I have some notion of what possessed the man, for he was crazed with passion at fighting the race which had so cruelly wronged him. Horror-struck, I saw him swing down from the bank, splash through the water with raised tomahawk, and gain the top of the run. In less time than it takes me to write these words he had dragged a hideous, naked warrior out of the brambles, and with an avalanche of crumbling earth they slid into the waters of the creek. Polly Ann and I stared transfixed at the fearful fight that followed, nor can I give any adequate description of it. Weldon had struck through the brambles, but the savage had taken the blow on his gun-barrel and broken the handle of the tomahawk, and it was man to man as they rolled in the shallow water, locked in a death embrace. Neither might reach for his knife, neither was able to hold the other down, Weldon's curses surcharged with hatred, the Indian straining silently save for a gasp or a guttural note, the white a bearded madman, the savage a devil with a glistening, paint-streaked body, his features now agonized as his muscles strained and cracked, now lighted with a diabolical joy. But the pent-up rage of months gave the white man strength.

Polly Ann and I were powerless for fear of shooting Weldon, and gazed absorbed at the fiendish scene with eyes not to be withdrawn. The tree-trunk shook. A long, bronze arm reached out from above, and a painted face glowered at us from the very roots where Weldon had lain. That moment I took to be my last, and in it I seemed to taste all eternity. I heard but faintly a noise beyond. It was the shock of the heavy Indian falling on Polly Ann and me as we cowered under the trunk, and even then there was an instant that we stood gazing at him as at a worm writhing in the clay. It was she who fired the pistol and made the great hole in his head, and so he twitched and died. After that a confusion of shots, war-whoops, a vision of two naked forms flying from tree to tree towards the cane, and then — God be praised — Tom's voice shouting: —

"Polly Ann! Polly Ann!"

Before she had reached the top of the bank Tom had her in his arms, and a dozen tall gray figures leaped the six feet into the stream and stopped. My own eyes turned with theirs to see the body of poor Weldon lying face downward in the water. But beyond it a tragedy awaited me. Defiant, immovable, save for the heaving of his naked chest, the savage who had killed him stood erect with folded arms facing us. The smoke cleared away from a gleaming rifle-barrel, and the brave staggered and fell and died as silent as he stood, his feathers making ripples in the stream. It was cold-blooded, if you like, but war in those days was to the death, and knew no mercy. The tall backwoodsman who had shot him waded across the stream, and in the twinkling of an eye seized the scalp-lock and ran it round with his knife, holding up the bleeding trophy with a shout. Staggering to my feet, I stretched myself, but I had been cramped so long that I tottered and would have fallen had not Tom's hand steadied me.

"Davy!" he cried. "Thank God, little Davy! the varmints didn't get ye."

"And you, Tom?" I answered, looking up at him, bewildered with happiness.

"They was nearer than I suspicioned when I went off," he said, and looked at me curiously. "Drat the little deevil," he said affectionately, and his voice trembled, "he took care of Polly Ann, I'll warrant."

He carried me to the top of the bank, where we were surrounded by the whole band of backwoodsmen.

"That he did!" cried Polly Ann, "and fetched a redskin yonder as clean as you could have done it, Tom."

"The little deevil!" exclaimed Tom again.

I looked up, burning with this praise from Tom (for I had never thought of praise nor of anything save his happiness and Polly Ann's). I looked up, and my eyes were caught and held with a strange fascination by fearless blue ones that gazed down into them. I give you but a poor description of the owner of these blue eyes, for personal magnetism springs not from one feature or another. He was a young man, — perhaps five and twenty as I now know age, — woodsman-clad, square-built, sun-reddened. His hair might have been orange in one light and sand-colored in another. With a boy's sense of such things I knew that the other woodsmen were waiting for him to speak, for they glanced at him expectantly.

"You had a near call, McChesney," said he, at length; "fortunate for you we were after this band, — shot some of it to pieces yesterday morning." He paused, looking at Tom with that quality of tribute which comes naturally to a leader of men. "By God," he said, "I didn't think you'd try it."

"My word is good, Colonel Clark," answered Tom, simply.

Young Colonel Clark glanced at the lithe figure of Polly Ann. He seemed a man of few words, for he did not add to his praise of Tom's achievement by complimenting her as Captain Sevier had done. In fact, he said nothing more, but leaped down the bank and strode into the water where the body of Weldon lay, and dragged it out himself. We gathered around it silently, and two great tears rolled down Polly Ann's cheeks as she parted the hair with tenderness and loosened the clenched hands.

Nor did any of the tall woodsmen speak. Poor Weldon! The tragedy of his life and death was the tragedy of Kentucky herself. They buried him by the waterside, where he had fallen.

But there was little time for mourning on the border. The burial finished, the Kentuckians splashed across the creek, and one of them, stooping with a shout at the mouth of the run, lifted out of the brambles a painted body with drooping head and feathers trailing.

"Ay, Mac," he cried, "here's a sculp for ye."

"It's Davy's," exclaimed Polly Ann from the top of the bank; "Davy shot that one."

"Hooray for Davy," cried a huge, strapping backwoodsman who stood beside her, and the others laughingly took up the shout. "Hooray for Davy. Bring him over, Cowan." The giant threw me on his shoulder as though I had been a fox, leaped down, and took the stream in two strides. I little thought how often he was to carry me in days to come, but I felt a great awe at the strength of him, as I stared into his rough features and his veined and weathered skin. He stood me down beside the Indian's body, smiled as he whipped my hunting knife from my belt, and said, "Now, Davy, take the sculp."

Nothing loath, I seized the Indian by the long scalp-lock, while my big friend guided my hand, and amid laughter and cheers I cut off my first trophy of war. Nor did I have any other feeling than fierce hatred of the race which had killed my father.

Those who have known armies in their discipline will find it difficult to understand the leadership of the border. Such leadership was granted only to those whose force and individuality compelled men to obey them. I had my first glimpse of it that day. This Colonel Clark to whom Tom delivered Mr. Robertson's letter was perchance the youngest man in the company that had rescued us, saving only a slim lad of seventeen whom I noticed and envied, and whose name was James Ray. Colonel Clark, so I was told by my friend Cowan, held that title in Kentucky by reason of his prowess.

Clark had been standing quietly on the bank while I had scalped my first redskin. Then he called Tom McChesney to him and questioned him closely about our journey, the signs we had seen, and, finally, the news in the Watauga settlements. While this was going on the others gathered round them.

"What now?" asked Cowan, when he had finished.

"Back to Harrodstown," answered the Colonel, shortly.

There was a brief silence, followed by a hoarse murmur from a thick-set man at the edge of the crowd, who shouldered his way to the centre of it.

"We set out to hunt a fight, and my pluck is to clean up. We ain't finished 'em yet."

The man had a deep, coarse voice that was a piece with his roughness.

"I reckon this band ain't a-goin' to harry the station any more, McGary," cried Cowan.

"By Job, what did we come out for? Who'll take the trail with me?"

There were some who answered him, and straightway they began to quarrel among themselves, filling the woods with a babel of voices. While I stood listening to these disputes with a boy's awe of a man's quarrel, what was my astonishment to feel a hand on my shoulder. It was Colonel Clark's, and he was not paying the least attention to the dispute.

"Davy," said he, "you look as if you could make a fire."

"Yes, sir," I answered, gasping.

"Well," said he, "make one."

I lighted a piece of punk with the flint, and, wrapping it up in some dry brush, soon had a blaze started. Looking up, I caught his eye on me again.

"Mrs. McChesney," said Colonel Clark to Polly Ann, "you look as if you could make johnny-cake. Have you any meal?"

"That I have," cried Polly Ann, "though it's fair mouldy. Davy, run and fetch it."

I ran to the pack on the sorrel mare. When I returned Mr. Clark said: —

"That seems a handy boy, Mrs. McChesney."

"Handy!" cried Polly Ann, "I reckon he's more than handy. Didn't he save my life twice on our way out here?"

"And how was that?" said the Colonel.

"Run and fetch some water, Davy," said Polly Ann, and straightway launched forth into a vivid description of my exploits, as she mixed the meal. Nay, she went so far as to tell how she came by me. The young Colonel listened gravely, though with a gleam now and then in his blue eyes. Leaning on his long rifle, he paid no manner of attention to the angry voices near by, — which conduct to me was little short of the marvellous.

"Now, Davy," said he, at length, "the rest of your history."

"There is little of it, sir," I answered. "I was born in the Yadkin country, lived alone with my father, who was a Scotchman. He hated a man named Cameron, took me to Charlestown, and left me with some kin of his who had a place called Temple Bow, and went off to fight Cameron and the Cherokees." There I gulped. "He was killed at Cherokee Ford, and — and I ran away from Temple Bow, and found Polly Ann."

This time I caught something of surprise on the Colonel's face.

"By thunder, Davy," said he, "but you have a clean gift for brief narrative. Where did you learn it?"

"My father was a gentleman once, and taught me to speak and read," I answered, as I brought a flat piece of limestone for Polly Ann's baking.

"And what would you like best to be when you grow up, Davy?" he asked.

"Six feet," said I, so promptly that he laughed.

"Faith," said Polly Ann, looking at me comically, "he may be many things, but I'll warrant he'll never be that."

I have often thought since that young Mr. Clark showed much of the wisdom of the famous king of Israel on that day. Polly Ann cooked a piece of a deer which one of the woodsmen had with him, and the quarrel died

of itself when we sat down to this and the johnny-cake. By noon we had taken up the trace for Harrodstown, marching with scouts ahead and behind. Mr. Clark walked mostly alone, seemingly wrapped in thought. At times he had short talks with different men, oftenest — I noted with pride — with Tom McChesney. And more than once when he halted he called me to him, my answers to his questions seeming to amuse him. Indeed, I became a kind of pet with the backwoodsmen, Cowan often flinging me to his shoulder as he swung along. The pack was taken from the sorrel mare and divided among the party, and Polly Ann made to ride that we might move the faster.

It must have been the next afternoon, about four, that the rough stockade of Harrodstown greeted our eyes as we stole cautiously to the edge of the forest. And the sight of no roofs and spires could have been more welcome than that of these logs and cabins, broiling in the midsummer sun. At a little distance from the fort, a silent testimony of siege, the stumpy, cleared fields were overgrown with weeds, tall and rank, the corn choked. Nearer the stockade, where the keepers of the fort might venture out at times, a more orderly growth met the eye. It was young James Ray whom Colonel Clark singled to creep with our message to the gates. At six, when the smoke was rising from the stone chimneys behind the palisades, Ray came back to say that all was well. Then we went forward quickly, hands waved a welcome above the logs, the great wooden gates swung open, and at last we had reached the haven for which we had suffered so much. Mangy dogs barked at our feet, men and women ran forward joyfully to seize our hands and greet us.

And so we came to Kaintuckee.

CHAPTER X

HARRODSTOWN

THE old forts like Harrodstown and Boonesboro and Logan's at St. Asaph's have long since passed away. It is many, many years since I lived through that summer of siege in Harrodstown, the horrors of it are faded and dim, the discomforts lost to a boy thrilled with a new experience. I have read in my old age the books of travellers in Kentucky, English and French, who wrote much of squalor and strife and sin and little of those qualities that go to the conquest of an empire and the making of a people. Perchance my own pages may be colored by gratitude and love for the pioneers amongst whom I found myself, and thankfulness to God that we had reached them alive.

I know not how many had been cooped up in the little fort since the early spring, awaiting the chance to go back to their weed-choked clearings. The fort at Harrodstown was like an hundred others I have since seen, but sufficiently surprising to me then. Imagine a great parallelogram made of log cabins set end to end, their common outside wall being the wall of the fort, and loopholed. At the four corners of the parallelogram the cabins jutted out, with ports in the angle in order to give a flanking fire in case the savages reached the palisade. And then there were huge log gates with watch-towers on either side, where sentries sat day and night scanning the forest line. Within the fort was a big common dotted with forest trees, where such cattle as had been saved browsed on the scanty grass. There had been but the one scrawny horse before our arrival.

And the settlers! How shall I describe them as they crowded around us inside the gate? Some stared at us with sallow faces and eyes brightened by the fever, yet others had the red glow of health. Many of the men wore rough beards, unkempt, and yellow, weather-worn hunting shirts, often stained with blood. The barefooted women wore sunbonnets and loose homespun gowns, some of linen made from nettles, while the children swarmed here and there and everywhere in any costume that chance had given them. All seemingly talking at once, they plied us with question after question of the trace, the Watauga settlements, the news in the Carolinys, and how the war went.

"A lad is it, this one," said an Irish voice near me, "and a woman! The dear help us, and who'd 'ave thought to see a woman come over the mountain this year! Where did ye find them, Bill Cowan?"

"Near the Crab Orchard, and the lad killed and sculped a six-foot brave."

"The saints save us! And what 'll be his name?"

"Davy," said my friend.

"Is it Davy? Sure his namesake killed a giant, too."

"And is he come along, also?" said another. His shy blue eyes and stiff blond hair gave him a strange appearance in a hunting shirt.

"Hist to him! Who will ye be talkin' about, Poulsson? Is it King David ye mane?"

There was a roar of laughter, and this was my introduction to Terence McCann and Swein Poulsson. The fort being crowded, we were put into a cabin with Terence and Cowan and Cowan's wife — a tall, gaunt woman with a sharp tongue and a kind heart — and her four brats, "All hugemsmug together," as Cowan said. And that night we supped upon dried buffalo meat and boiled nettle-tops, for of such was the fare in Harrodstown that summer.

"Tom McChesney kept his faith." One other man was to keep his faith with the little community — George Rogers Clark. And I soon learned that trustworthiness is held in greater esteem in a border community than any-

where else. Of course, the love of the frontier was in the grain of these men. But what did they come back to? Day after day would the sun rise over the forest and beat down upon the little enclosure in which we were penned. The row of cabins leaning against the stockade marked the boundaries of our diminutive world. Beyond them, invisible, lurked a relentless foe. Within, the greater souls alone were calm, and a man's worth was set down to a hair's breadth. Some were always to be found squatting on their door-steps cursing the hour which had seen them depart for this land; some wrestled and fought on the common, for a fist fight with a fair field and no favor was a favorite amusement of the backwoodsmen. My big friend, Cowan, was the champion of these, and often of an evening the whole of the inhabitants would gather near the spring to see him fight those who had the courage to stand up to him. His muscles were like hickory wood, and I have known a man insensible for a quarter of an hour after one of his blows. Strangely enough, he never fought in anger, and was the first to the spring for a gourd of water after the fight was over. But Tom McChesney was the best wrestler of the lot, and could make a wider leap than any other man in Harrodstown.

Tom's reputation did not end there, for he became one of the two breadwinners of the station. I would better have said *meat*winners. Woe be to the incautious who, lulled by a week of fancied security, ventured out into the dishevelled field for a little food! In the early days of the siege man after man had gone forth for game, never to return. Until Tom came, one only had been successful, — that lad of seventeen, whose achievements were the envy of my boyish soul, James Ray. He slept in the cabin next to Cowan's, and long before the dawn had revealed the forest line had been wont to steal out of the gates on the one scrawny horse the Indians had left them, gain the Salt River, and make his way thence through the water to some distant place where the listening savages could not hear his shot. And now Tom took his turn. Often did I sit with Polly Ann till midnight in the sentry's

tower, straining my ears for the owl's hoot that warned us of his coming. Sometimes he was empty-handed, but sometimes a deer hung limp and black across his saddle, or a pair of turkeys swung from his shoulder.

"Arrah, darlin'," said Terence to Polly Ann, "'tis yer husband and James is the jools av the fort. Sure I niver loved me father as I do thim."

I would have given kingdoms in those days to have been seventeen and James Ray. When he was in the fort I dogged his footsteps, and listened with a painful yearning to the stories of his escapes from the roving bands. And as many a character is watered in its growth by hero-worship, so my own grew firmer in the contemplation of Ray's resourcefulness. My strange life had far removed me from lads of my own age, and he took a fancy to me, perhaps because of the very persistence of my devotion to him. I cleaned his gun, filled his powder flask, and ran to do his every bidding.

I used in the hot summer days to lie under the elm tree and listen to the settlers' talk about a man named Henderson, who had bought a great part of Kentucky from the Indians, and had gone out with Boone to found Boonesboro some two years before. They spoke of much that I did not understand concerning the discountenance by Virginia of these claims, speculating as to whether Henderson's grants were good. For some of them held these grants, and others Virginia grants — a fruitful source of quarrel between them. Some spoke, too, of Washington and his ragged soldiers going up and down the old colonies and fighting for a freedom which there seemed little chance of getting. But their anger seemed to blaze most fiercely when they spoke of a mysterious British general named Hamilton, whom they called "the ha'r buyer," and who from his stronghold in the north country across the great Ohio sent down these hordes of savages to harry us. I learned to hate Hamilton with the rest, and pictured him with the visage of a fiend. We laid at his door every outrage that had happened at the three stations, and put upon him the blood of those who had been carried off to

torture in the Indian villages of the northern forests. And when — amidst great excitement — a spent runner would arrive from Boonesboro or St. Asaph's and beg Mr. Clark for a squad, it was commonly with the first breath that came into his body that he cursed Hamilton.

So the summer wore away, while we lived from hand to mouth on such scanty fare as the two of them shot and what we could venture to gather in the unkempt fields near the gates. A winter of famine lurked ahead, and men were goaded near to madness at the thought of clearings made and corn planted in the spring within reach of their hands, as it were, and they might not harvest it. At length, when a fortnight had passed, and Tom and Ray had gone forth day after day without sight or fresh sign of Indians, the weight lifted from our hearts. There were many things that might yet be planted and come to maturity before the late Kentucky frosts.

The pressure within the fort, like a flood, opened the gates of it, despite the sturdily disapproving figure of a young man who stood silent under the sentry box, leaning on his Deckard. He was Colonel George Rogers Clark,[1] Commander-in-chief of the backwoodsmen of Kentucky, whose power was reënforced by that strange thing called an education. It was this, no doubt, gave him command of words when he chose to use them.

"Faith," said Terence, as we passed him, "'tis a foine man he is, and a gintleman born. Wasn't it him gathered the Convintion here in Harrodstown last year that chose him and another to go to the Virginia legislatoor? And him but a lad, ye might say. The divil fly away wid his caution! Sure the redskins is as toired as us, and gone home to the wives and childher, bad cess to thim."

And so the first day the gates were opened we went into the fields a little way; and the next day a little farther. They had once seemed to me an unexplored and forbidden country as I searched them with my eyes from the sentry boxes. And yet I felt a shame to go with Polly

[1] It appears that Mr. Clark had not yet received the title of Colonel, though he held command. — Editor.

Ann and Mrs. Cowan and the women while James Ray and Tom sat with the guard of men between us and the forest line. Like a child on a holiday, Polly Ann ran hither and thither among the stalks, her black hair flying and a song on her lips.

"Soon we'll be having a little home of our own, Davy," she cried; "Tom has the place chose on a knoll by the river, and the land is rich with hickory and pawpaw. I reckon we may be going there next week."

Caution being born into me with all the strength of a vice, I said nothing. Whereupon she seized me in her strong hands and shook me.

"Ye little imp!" said she, while the women paused in their work to laugh at us.

"The boy is right, Polly Ann," said Mrs. Harrod, "and he's got more sense than most of the men in the fort."

"Ay, that he has," the gaunt Mrs. Cowan put in, eying me fiercely, while she gave one of her own offsprings a slap that sent him spinning.

Whatever Polly Ann might have said would have been to the point, but it was lost, for just then the sound of a shot came down the wind, and a half a score of women stampeded through the stalks, carrying me down like a reed before them. When I staggered to my feet Polly Ann and Mrs. Cowan and Mrs. Harrod were standing alone. For there was little of fear in those three.

"Shucks!" said Mrs. Cowan, "I reckon it's that Jim Ray shooting at a mark," and she began to pick nettles again.

"Vimmen is a shy critter," remarked Swein Poulsson, coming up. I had a shrewd notion that he had run with the others.

"Wimmen!" Mrs. Cowan fairly roared. "Wimmen! Tell us how ye went in March with the boys to fight the varmints at the Sugar Orchard, Swein!"

We all laughed, for we loved him none the less. His little blue eyes were perfectly solemn as he answered: —

"Ve send you fight Injuns mit your tongue, Mrs. Cowan. Then we haf no more troubles."

"Land of Canaan!" cried she, "I reckon I could do more harm with it than you with a gun."

There were many such false alarms in the bright days following, and never a bullet sped from the shadow of the forest. Each day we went farther afield, and each night trooped merrily in through the gates with hopes of homes and clearings rising in our hearts — until the motionless figure of the young Virginian met our eye. It was then that men began to scoff at him behind his back, though some spoke with sufficient backwoods bluntness to his face. And yet he gave no sign of anger or impatience. Not so the other leaders. No sooner did the danger seem past than bitter strife sprang up within the walls. Even the two captains were mortal enemies. One was Harrod, a tall, spare, dark-haired man of great endurance, — a type of the best that conquered the land for the nation; the other, that Hugh McGary of whom I have spoken, coarse and brutal, if you like, but fearless and a leader of men withal.

A certain Sunday morning, I remember, broke with a cloud-flecked sky, and as we were preparing to go afield with such ploughs as could be got together (we were to sow turnips) the loud sounds of a quarrel came from the elm at the spring. With one accord men and women and children flocked thither, and as we ran we heard McGary's voice above the rest. Worming my way, boylike, through the crowd, I came upon McGary and Harrod glaring at each other in the centre of it.

"By Job! there's no devil if I'll stand back from my clearing and waste the rest of the summer for the fears of a pack of cowards. I'll take a posse and march to Shawanee Springs this day, and see any man a fair fight that tries to stop me."

"And who's in command here?" demanded Harrod.

"I am, for one," said McGary, with an oath, "and my corn's on the ear. I've held back long enough, I tell you, and I'll starve this winter for you nor any one else."

Harrod turned.

"Where's Clark?" he said to Bowman.

"Clark!" roared McGary, "Clark be d—d. Ye'd think he was a woman." He strode up to Harrod until their faces almost touched, and his voice shook with the intensity of his anger. "By G—d, you nor Clark nor any one else will stop me, I say!" He swung around and faced the people. "Come on, boys! We'll fetch that corn, or know the reason why."

A responding murmur showed that the bulk of them were with him. Weary of the pent-up life, longing for action, and starved for a good meal, the anger of his many followers against Clark and Harrod was nigh as great as his. He started roughly to shoulder his way out, and whether from accident or design Captain Harrod slipped in front of him, I never knew. The thing that followed happened quickly as the catching of my breath. I saw McGary powdering his pan, and Harrod his, and felt the crowd giving back like buffalo. All at once the circle had vanished, and the two men were standing not five paces apart with their rifles clutched across their bodies, each watching, catlike, for the other to level. It was a cry that startled us — and them. There was a vision of a woman flying across the common, and we saw the dauntless Mrs. Harrod snatching her husband's gun from his resisting hands. So she saved his life and McGary's.

At this point Colonel Clark was seen coming from the gate. When he got to Harrod and McGary the quarrel blazed up again, but now it was between the three of them, and Clark took Harrod's rifle from Mrs. Harrod and held it. However, it was presently decided that McGary should wait one more day before going to his clearing; whereupon the gates were opened, the picked men going ahead to take station as a guard, and soon we were hard at work, ploughing here and mowing there, and in another place putting seed in the ground: in the cheer of the work hardships were forgotten, and we paused now and again to laugh at some sally of Terence McCann's or odd word of Swein Poulsson's. As the day wore on to afternoon a blue haze — harbinger of autumn — settled over fort and forest. Bees hummed in the air as they

searched hither and thither amongst the flowers, or shot straight as a bullet for a distant hive. But presently a rifle cracked, and we raised our heads.

"Hist!" said Terence, "the bhoys on watch is that warlike! Whin there's no redskins to kill they must be wastin' good powdher on a three."

I leaped upon a stump and scanned the line of sentries between us and the woods; only their heads and shoulders appeared above the rank growth. I saw them looking from one to another questioningly, some shouting words I could not hear. Then I saw some running; and next, as I stood there wondering, came another crack, and then a volley like the noise of a great fire licking into dry wood, and things that were not bees humming round about. A distant man in a yellow hunting shirt stumbled, and was drowned in the tangle as in water. Around me men dropped plough-handles and women baskets, and as we ran our legs grew numb and our bodies cold at a sound which had haunted us in dreams by night — the war-whoop. The deep and guttural song of it rose and fell with a horrid fierceness. An agonized voice was in my ears, and I halted, ashamed. It was Polly Ann's.

"Davy!" she cried, "Davy, have ye seen Tom?"

Two men dashed by. I seized one by the fringe of his shirt, and he flung me from my feet. The other leaped me as I knelt.

"Run, ye fools!" he shouted. But we stood still, with yearning eyes staring back through the frantic forms for a sight of Tom's.

"I'll go back!" I cried, "I'll go back for him. Do you run to the fort." For suddenly I seemed to forget my fear, nor did even the hideous notes of the scalp halloo disturb me. Before Polly Ann could catch me I had turned and started, stumbled, — I thought on a stump, — and fallen headlong among the nettles with a stinging pain in my leg. Staggering to my feet, I tried to run on, fell again, and putting down my hand found it smeared with blood. A man came by, paused an instant while his eye caught me, and ran on again. I shall remember his face and name

to my dying day; but there is no reason to put it down here. In a few seconds' space as I lay I suffered all the pains of captivity and of death by torture, that cry of savage man an hundred times more frightful than savage beast sounding in my ears, and plainly nearer now by half the first distance. Nearer, and nearer yet — and then I heard my name called. I was lifted from the ground, and found myself in the lithe arms of Polly Ann.

"Set me down!" I screamed, "set me down!" and must have added some of the curses I had heard in the fort. But she clutched me tightly (God bless the memory of those frontier women!), and flew like a deer toward the gates. Over her shoulder I glanced back. A spare three hundred yards away in a ragged line a hundred red devils were bounding after us with feathers flying and mouths open as they yelled. Again I cried to her to set me down; but though her heart beat faster and her breath came shorter, she held me the tighter. Second by second they gained on us, relentlessly. Were we near the fort? Hoarse shouts answered the question, but they seemed distant — too distant. The savages were gaining, and Polly Ann's breath quicker still. She staggered, but the brave soul had no thought of faltering. I had a sight of a man on a plough horse with dangling harness coming up from somewhere, of the man leaping off, of ourselves being pitched on the animal's bony back and clinging there at the gallop, the man running at the side. Shots whistled over our heads, and here was the brown fort. Its big gates swung together as we dashed through the narrowed opening. Then, as he lifted us off, I knew that the man who had saved us was Tom himself. The gates closed with a bang, and a patter of bullets beat against them like rain.

Through the shouting and confusion came a cry in a voice I knew, now pleading, now commanding.

"Open, open! For God's sake open!"

"It's Ray! Open for Ray! Ray's out!"

Some were seizing the bar to thrust it back when the heavy figure of McGary crushed into the crowd beside it.

"By Job, I'll shoot the man that touches it!" he shouted, as he tore them away. But the sturdiest of them went again to it, and cursed him. And while they fought backward and forward, the lad's mother, Mrs. Ray, cried out to them to open in tones to rend their hearts. But McGary had gained the bar and swore (perhaps wisely) that he would not sacrifice the station for one man. Where was Ray?

Where was Ray, indeed? It seemed as if no man might live in the hellish storm that raged without the walls: as if the very impetus of hate and fury would carry the savages over the stockade to murder us. Into the turmoil at the gate came Colonel Clark, sending the disputants this way and that to defend the fort, McGary to command one quarter, Harrod and Bowman another, and every man that could be found to a loophole, while Mrs. Ray continued to run up and down, wringing her hands, now facing one man, now another. Some of her words came to me, shrilly, above the noise.

"He fed you — he fed you. Oh, my God, and you are grateful — grateful! When you were starving he risked his life —"

Torn by anxiety for my friend, I dragged myself into the nearest cabin, and a man was fighting there in the half-light at the port. The huge figure I knew to be my friend Cowan's, and when he drew back to load I seized his arm, shouting Ray's name. Although the lead was pattering on the other side of the logs, Cowan lifted me to the port. And there, stretched on the ground behind a stump, within twenty feet of the walls, was James. Even as I looked the puffs of dust at his side showed that the savages knew his refuge. I saw him level and fire, and then Bill Cowan set me down and began to ram in a charge with tremendous energy.

Was there no way to save Ray? I stood turning this problem in my mind, subconsciously aware of Cowan's movements: of his yells when he thought he had made a shot, when Polly Ann appeared at the doorway. Darting in, she fairly hauled me to the shake-down in the far corner.

"Will ye bleed to death, Davy?" she cried, as she slipped off my legging and bent over the wound. Her eye lighting on a gourdful of water on the puncheon table, she tore a strip from her dress and washed and bound me deftly. The bullet was in the flesh, and gave me no great pain.

"Lie there, ye imp!" she commanded, when she had finished.

"Some one's under the bed," said I, for I had heard a movement.

In an instant we were down on our knees on the hard dirt floor, and there was a man's foot in a moccasin! We both grabbed it and pulled, bringing to life a person with little blue eyes and stiff blond hair.

"Swein Poulsson!" exclaimed Polly Ann, giving him an involuntary kick, "may the devil give ye shame!"

Swein Poulsson rose to a sitting position and clasped his knees in his hands.

"I haf one great fright," said he.

"Send him into the common with the women in yere place, Mis' McChesney," growled Cowan, who was loading.

"By tam!" said Swein Poulsson, leaping to his feet, "I vill stay here und fight. I am prave once again." Stooping down, he searched under the bed, pulled out his rifle, powdered the pan, and flying to the other port, fired. At that Cowan left his post and snatched the rifle from Poulsson's hands.

"Ye're but wasting powder," he cried angrily.

"Then, by tam, I am as vell under the bed," said Poulsson. "Vat can I do?"

I had it.

"Dig!" I shouted; and seizing the astonished Cowan's tomahawk from his belt I set to work furiously chopping at the dirt beneath the log wall. "Dig, so that James can get under."

Cowan gave me the one look, swore a mighty oath, and leaping to the port shouted to Ray in a thundering voice what we were doing.

"Dig!" roared Cowan. "Dig, for the love of God, for he can't hear me."

The three of us set to work with all our might, Poulsson making great holes in the ground at every stroke, Polly Ann scraping at the dirt with the gourd. Two feet below the surface we struck the edge of the lowest log, and then it was Poulsson who got into the hole with his hunting knife — perspiring, muttering to himself, working as one possessed with a fury, while we scraped out the dirt from under him. At length, after what seemed an age of staring at his legs, the ground caved on him, and he would have smothered if we had not dragged him out by the heels, sputtering and all powdered brown. But there was the daylight under the log.

Again Cowan shouted at Ray, and again, but he did not understand. It was then the miracle happened. I have seen brave men and cowards since, and I am as far as ever from distinguishing them. Before we knew it Poulsson was in the hole once more — had wriggled out of it on the other side, and was squirming in a hail of bullets towards Ray. There was a full minute of suspense — perhaps two — during which the very rifles of the fort were silent (though the popping in the weeds was redoubled), and then the barrel of a Deckard was poked through the hole. After it came James Ray himself, and lastly Poulsson, and a great shout went out from the loopholes and was taken up by the women in the common.

* * * * * * *

Swein Poulsson had become a hero, nor was he willing to lose any of the glamour which was a hero's right. As the Indians' fire slackened, he went from cabin to cabin, and if its occupants failed to mention the exploit (some did fail so to do, out of mischief), Swein would say: —

"You did not see me safe James, no? I vill tell you joost how."

It never leaked out that Swein was first of all under the bed, for Polly Ann and Bill Cowan and myself swore to keep the secret. But they told how I had thought of

digging the hole under the logs — a happy circumstance which got me a reputation for wisdom beyond my years. There was a certain Scotchman at Harrodstown called McAndrew, and it was he gave me the nickname "Canny Davy," and I grew to have a sort of precocious fame in the station. Often Captain Harrod or Bowman or some of the others would pause in their arguments and say gravely, "What does Davy think of it?" This was not good for a boy, and the wonder of it is that it did not make me altogether insupportable. One effect it had on me — to make me long even more earnestly to be a man.

The impulse of my reputation led me farther. A fortnight of more inactivity followed, and then we ventured out into the fields once more. But I went with the guard this time, not with the women, — thanks to a whim the men had for humoring me.

"Arrah, and beant he a man all but two feet," said Terence, "wid more brain than me an' Bill Cowan and Poulsson togither? 'Tis a fox's nose Davy has for the divils, Bill. Sure he can smell thim the same as you an' me kin see the red paint on their faces."

"I reckon that's true," said Bill Cowan, with solemnity, and so he carried me off.

At length the cattle were turned out to browse greedily through the clearing, while we lay in the woods by the forest and listened to the sound of their bells; but when they strayed too far, I was often sent to drive them back. Once when this happened I followed them to the shade at the edge of the woods, for it was noon, and the sun beat down fiercely. And there I sat for some time watching them as they lashed their sides with their tails and pawed the ground, for experience is a good master. Whether or not the flies were all that troubled them I could not tell, and no sound save the tinkle of their bells broke the noonday stillness. Making a circle I drove them back toward the fort, much troubled in mind. I told Cowan, but he laughed and said it was the flies. Yet I was not satisfied, and finally stole back again to the place where I had found them. I sat a long time hidden

at the edge of the forest, listening until my imagination tricked me into hearing those noises which I feared and yet longed for. Trembling, I stole a little farther in the shade of the woods, and then a little farther still. The leaves rustled in the summer's breeze, patches of sunlight flickered on the mould, the birds twittered, and the squirrels scolded. A chipmunk frightened me as he flew chattering along a log. And yet I went on. I came to the creek as it flowed silently in the shade, stepped in, and made my way slowly down it, I know not how far, walking in the water, my eye alert to every movement about me. At length I stopped and caught my breath. Before me, in a glade opening out under great trees, what seemed a myriad of forked sticks were piled against one another, three by three, and it struck me all in a heap that I had come upon a great encampment. But the skeletons of the pyramid tents alone remained. Where were the skins? Was the camp deserted?

For a while I stared through the brier leaves, then I took a venture, pushed on, and found myself in the midst of the place. It must have held near a thousand warriors. All about me were gray heaps of ashes, and bones of deer and elk and buffalo scattered, some picked clean, some with the meat and hide sticking to them. Impelled by a strong fascination, I went hither and thither until a sound brought me to a stand — the echoing crack of a distant rifle. On the heels of it came another, then several together, and a faint shouting borne on the light wind. Terrorized, I sought for shelter. A pile of brush underlain by ashes was by, and I crept into that. The sounds continued, but seemed to come no nearer, and my courage returning, I got out again and ran wildly through the camp toward the briers on the creek, expecting every moment to be tumbled headlong by a bullet. And when I reached the briers, what between panting and the thumping of my heart I could for a few moments hear nothing. Then I ran on again up the creek, heedless of cover, stumbling over logs and trailing vines, when all at once a dozen bronze forms glided with the speed of deer across my path ahead.

They splashed over the creek and were gone. Bewildered with fear, I dropped under a fallen tree. Shouts were in my ears, and the noise of men running. I stood up, and there, not twenty paces away, was Colonel Clark himself rushing toward me. He halted with a cry, raised his rifle, and dropped it at the sight of my queer little figure covered with ashes.

"My God!" he cried, "it's Davy."

"They crossed the creek," I shouted, pointing the way, "they crossed the creek, some twelve of them."

"Ay," he said, staring at me, and by this time the rest of the guard were come up. They too stared, with different exclamations on their lips, — Cowan and Bowman and Tom McChesney and Terence McCann in front.

"And there's a great camp below," I went on, "deserted, where a thousand men have been."

"A camp — deserted?" said Clark, quickly.

"Yes," I said, "yes." But he had already started forward and seized me by the arm.

"Lead on," he cried, "show it to us." He went ahead with me, travelling so fast that I must needs run to keep up, and fairly lifting me over the logs. But when we came in sight of the place he darted forward alone and went through it like a hound on the trail. The others followed him, crying out at the size of the place and poking among the ashes. At length they all took up the trail for a way down the creek. Presently Clark called a halt.

"I reckon that they've made for the Ohio," he said. And at this judgment from him the guard gave a cheer that might almost have been heard in the fields around the fort. The terror that had hovered over us all that long summer was lifted at last.

You may be sure that Cowan carried me back to the station. "To think it was Davy that found it!" he cried again and again, "to think it was Davy found it!"

"And wasn't it me that said he could smell the divils," said Terence, as he circled around us in a mimic war dance. And when from the fort they saw us coming across the fields they opened the gates in astonishment, and on hear-

ing the news gave themselves over to the wildest rejoicing. For the backwoodsmen were children of nature. Bill Cowan ran for the fiddle which he had carried so carefully over the mountain, and that night we had jigs and reels on the common while the big fellow played "Billy of the Wild Woods" and "Jump Juba," with all his might, and the pine knots threw their fitful, red light on the wild scenes of merriment. I must have cut a queer little figure as I sat between Cowan and Tom watching the dance, for presently Colonel Clark came up to us, laughing in his quiet way.

"Davy," said he, "there is another great man here who would like to see you," and led me away wondering. I went with him toward the gate, burning all over with pride at this attention, and beside a torch there a broad-shouldered figure was standing, at sight of whom I had a start of remembrance.

"Do you know who that is, Davy?" said Colonel Clark.

"It's Mr. Daniel Boone," said I.

"By thunder," said Clark, "I believe the boy *is* a wizard," while Mr. Boone's broad mouth was creased into a smile, and there was a trace of astonishment, too, in his kindly eye.

"Mr. Boone came to my father's cabin on the Yadkin once," I said; "he taught me to skin a deer."

"Ay, that I did," exclaimed Mr. Boone, "and I said ye'd make a woodsman sometime."

Mr. Boone, it seemed, had come over from Boonesboro to consult with Colonel Clark on certain matters, and had but just arrived. But so modest was he that he would not let it be known that he was in the station, for fear of interrupting the pleasure. He was much the same as I had known him, only grown older and his reputation now increased to vastness. He and Clark sat on a door log talking for a long time on Kentucky matters, the strength of the forts, the prospect of new settlers that autumn, of the British policy, and finally of a journey which Colonel Clark was soon to make back to Virginia across the mountains. They seemed not to mind my presence. At length

Colonel Clark turned to me with that quiet, jocose way he had when relaxed.

"Davy," said he, "we'll see how much of a general you are. What would you do if a scoundrel named Hamilton far away at Detroit was bribing all the redskins he could find north of the Ohio to come down and scalp your men?"

"I'd go for Hamilton," I answered.

"By God!" exclaimed Clark, striking Mr. Boone on the knee, "that's what I'd do."

CHAPTER XI

FRAGMENTARY

Mr. Boone's visit lasted but a day. I was a great deal with Colonel Clark in the few weeks that followed before his departure for Virginia. He held himself a little aloof (as a leader should) from the captains in the station, without seeming to offend them. But he had a fancy for James Ray and for me, and he often took me into the woods with him by day, and talked with me of an evening.

"I'm going away to Virginia, Davy," he said; "will you not go with me? We'll see Williamsburg, and come back in the spring, and I'll have you a little rifle made."

My look must have been wistful.

"I can't leave Polly Ann and Tom," I answered.

"Well," he said, "I like that. Faith to your friends is a big equipment for life."

"But why are you going?" I asked.

"Because I love Kentucky best of all things in the world," he answered, smiling.

"And what are you going to do?" I insisted.

"Ah," he said, "that I can't tell even to you."

"To catch Hamilton?" I ventured at random.

He looked at me queerly.

"Would you go along, Davy?" said he, laughing now.

"Would you take Tom?"

"Among the first," answered Colonel Clark, heartily.

We were seated under the elm near the spring, and at that instant I saw Tom coming toward us. I jumped up, thinking to please him by this intelligence, when Colonel Clark pulled me down again.

"Davy," said he, almost roughly, I thought, "remember that we have been joking. Do you understand? — joking. You have a tongue in your mouth, but sense enough in your head, I believe, to hold it." He turned to Tom. "McChesney, this is a queer lad you brought us," said he.

"He's a little deevil," agreed Tom, for that had become a formula with him.

It was all very mysterious to me, and I lay awake many a night with curiosity, trying to solve a puzzle that was none of my business. And one day, to cap the matter, two woodsmen arrived at Harrodstown with clothes frayed and bodies lean from a long journey. Not one of the hundred questions with which they were beset would they answer, nor say where they had been or why, save that they had carried out certain orders of Clark, who was locked up with them in a cabin for several hours.

The first of October, the day of Colonel Clark's departure, dawned crisp and clear. He was to take with him the disheartened and the cowed, the weaklings who loved neither work nor exposure nor danger. And before he set out of the gate he made a little speech to the assembled people.

"My friends," he said, "you know me. I put the interests of Kentucky before my own. Last year when I left to represent her at Williamsburg there were some who said I would desert her. It was for her sake I made that journey, suffered the tortures of hell from scalded feet, was near to dying in the mountains. It was for her sake that I importuned the governor and council for powder and lead, and when they refused it I said to them, 'Gentlemen, a country that is not worth defending is not worth claiming.'"

At these words the settlers gave a great shout, waving their coonskin hats in the air.

"Ay, that ye did," cried Bill Cowan, "and got the amminition."

"I made that journey for her sake, I say," Colonel Clark continued, "and even so I am making this one.

I pray you trust me, and God bless and keep you while I am gone."

He did not forget to speak to me as he walked between our lines, and told me to be a good boy and that he would see me in the spring. Some of the women shed tears as he passed through the gate, and many of us climbed to sentry box and cabin roof that we might see the last of the little company wending its way across the fields. A motley company it was, the refuse of the station, headed by its cherished captain. So they started back over the weary road that led to that now far-away land of civilization and safety.

During the balmy Indian summer, when the sharper lines of nature are softened by the haze, some came to us from across the mountains to make up for the deserters. From time to time a little group would straggle to the gates of the station, weary and footsore, but overjoyed at the sight of white faces again: the fathers walking ahead with watchful eyes, the women and older children driving the horses, and the babies slung to the pack in hickory withes. Nay, some of our best citizens came to Kentucky swinging to the tail of a patient animal. The Indians were still abroad, and in small war parties darted hither and thither with incredible swiftness. And at night we would gather at the fire around our new emigrants to listen to the stories they had to tell, — familiar stories to all of us. Sometimes it had been the gobble of a wild turkey that had lured to danger, again a wood-owl had cried strangely in the night.

Winter came, and passed — somehow. I cannot dwell here on the tediousness of it, and the one bright spot it has left in my memory concerns Polly Ann. Did man, woman, or child fall sick, it was Polly Ann who nursed them. She had by nature the God-given gift of healing, knew by heart all the simple remedies that backwoods lore had inherited from the north of Ireland or borrowed from the Indians. Her sympathy and loving-kindness did more than these, her never tiring and ever cheerful watchfulness. She was deft, too, was Polly Ann, and

spun from nettle bark many a cut of linen that could scarce be told from flax. Before the sap began to run again in the maples there was not a soul in Harrodstown who did not love her, and I truly believe that most of them would have risked their lives to do her bidding.

Then came the sugaring, the warm days and the freezing nights when the earth stirs in her sleep and the taps drip from red sunrise to red sunset. Old and young went to the camps, the women and children boiling and graining, the squads of men posted in guards round about. And after that the days flew so quickly that it seemed as if the woods had burst suddenly into white flower, and it was spring again. And then — a joy to be long remembered — I went on a hunting trip with Tom and Cowan and three others where the Kentucky tumbles between its darkly wooded cliffs. And other wonders of that strange land I saw then for the first time: great licks, trampled down for acres by the wild herds, where the salt water oozes out of the hoofprints. On the edge of one of these licks we paused and stared breathless at giant bones sticking here and there in the black mud, and great skulls of fearful beasts half-embedded. This was called the Big Bone Lick, and some travellers that went before us had made their tents with the thighs of these monsters of a past age.

A danger past is oft a danger forgotten. Men went out to build the homes of which they had dreamed through the long winter. Axes rang amidst the white dogwoods and the crabs and redbuds, and there were riotous log-raisings in the clearings. But I think the building of Tom's house was the most joyous occasion of all, and for none in the settlement would men work more willingly than for him and Polly Ann. The cabin went up as if by magic. It stood on a rise upon the bank of the river in a grove of oaks and hickories, with a big persimmon tree in front of the door. It was in the shade of this tree that Polly Ann sat watching Tom and me through the mild spring days as we barked the roof, and none ever felt greater joy and pride in a home than she. We had our first supper on

a wide puncheon under the persimmon tree on the few pewter plates we had fetched across the mountain, the blue smoke from our own hearth rising in the valley until the cold night air spread it out in a line above us, while the horses grazed at the river's edge.

After that we went to ploughing, an occupation which Tom fancied but little, for he loved the life of a hunter best of all. But there was corn to be raised and fodder for the horses, and a truck-patch to be cleared near the house.

One day a great event happened, — and after the manner of many great events, it began in mystery. Leaping on the roan mare, I was riding like mad for Harrodstown to fetch Mrs. Cowan. And she, when she heard the summons, abandoned a turkey on the spit, pitched her brats out of the door, seized the mare, and dashing through the gates at a gallop left me to make my way back afoot. Scenting a sensation, I hurried along the wooded trace at a dog trot, and when I came in sight of the cabin there was Mrs. Cowan sitting on the step, holding in her long but motherly arms something bundled up in nettle linen, while Tom stood sheepishly by, staring at it.

"Shucks," Mrs. Cowan was saying loudly, "I reckon ye're as little use to-day as Swein Poulsson, — standin' there on one foot. Ye anger me — just grinning at it like a fool — and yer own doin'. Have ye forgot how to talk?"

Tom grinned the more, but was saved the effort of a reply by a loud noise from the bundle.

"Here's another," cried Mrs. Cowan to me. "Ye needn't act as if it was an animal. Faith, yereself was like that once, all red an' crinkled. But I warrant ye didn't have the heft," and she lifted it, judicially. "A grand baby," attacking Tom again, "and ye're no more worthy to be his father than Davy here."

Then I heard a voice calling me, and pushing past Mrs. Cowan, I ran into the cabin. Polly Ann lay on the log bedstead, and she turned to mine a face radiant with a happiness I had not imagined.

"Oh, Davy, have ye seen him? Have ye seen little Tom? Davy, I reckon I'll never be so happy again. Fetch him here, Mrs. Cowan."

Mrs. Cowan, with a glance of contempt at Tom and me, put the bundle tenderly down on the coarse brown sheet beside her.

Poor little Tom! Only the first fortnight of his existence was spent in peace. I have a pathetic memory of it all — of our little home, of our hopes for it, of our days of labor and nights of planning to make it complete. And then, one morning when Tom and I were turning over the black loam in the patch, while the baby slept peacefully in the shade, a sound came to our ears that made us pause and listen with bated breath. It was the sound of many guns, muffled in the distant forest. With a cry Polly Ann flew to the hickory cradle under the tree, Tom sprang for the rifle that was never far from his side, while with a kind of instinct I ran to catch the spancelled horses by the river. In silence and sorrow we fled through the tall cane, nor dared to take one last look at the cabin, or the fields lying black in the spring sunlight. The shots had ceased, but ere we had reached the little clearing McCann had made they began again, though as distant as before. Tom went ahead, while I led the mare and Polly Ann clutched the child to her breast. But when we came in sight of the fort across the clearings the gates were closed. There was nothing to do but cower in the thicket, listening while the battle went on afar, Polly Ann trying to still the cries of the child, lest they should bring death upon us. At length the shooting ceased; stillness reigned; then came a faint halloo, and out of the forest beyond us a man rode, waving his hat at the fort. After him came others. The gates opened, and we rushed pell-mell across the fields to safety.

The Indians had shot at a party shelling corn at Captain Bowman's plantation, and killed two, while the others had taken refuge in the crib. Fired at from every brake, James Ray had ridden to Harrodstown for succor, and the savages had been beaten off. But only the foolhardy

returned to their clearings now. We were on the edge of another dreaded summer of siege, the prospect of banishment from the homes we could almost see, staring us in the face, and the labors of the spring lost again. There was bitter talk within the gates that night, and many declared angrily that Colonel Clark had abandoned us. But I remembered what he had said, and had faith in him.

It was that very night, too, I sat with Cowan, who had duty in one of the sentry boxes, and we heard a voice calling softly under us. Fearing treachery, Cowan cried out for a sign. Then the answer came back loudly to open to a runner with a message from Colonel Clark to Captain Harrod. Cowan let the man in, while I ran for the captain, and in five minutes it seemed as if every man and woman and child in the fort were awake and crowding around the man by the gates, their eager faces reddened by the smoking pine knots. Where was Clark? What had he been doing? Had he deserted them?

"Deserted ye!" cried the runner, and swore a great oath. Wasn't Clark even then on the Ohio raising a great army with authority from the Commonwealth of Virginia to rid them of the red scourge? And would they desert him? Or would they be men and bring from Harrodstown the company he asked for? Then Captain Harrod read the letter asking him to raise the company, and before day had dawned they were ready for the word to march — ready to leave cabin and clearing, and wife and child, trusting in Clark's judgment for time and place. Never were volunteers mustered more quickly than in that cool April night by the gates of Harrodstown Station.

"And we'll fetch Davy along, for luck," cried Cowan, catching sight of me beside him.

"Sure we'll be wanting a dhrummer b'y," said McCann.

And so they enrolled me.

CHAPTER XII

THE CAMPAIGN BEGINS

"DAVY, take care of my Tom," cried Polly Ann.

I can see her now, standing among the women by the great hewn gateposts, with little Tom in her arms, holding him out to us as we filed by. And the vision of his little, round face haunted Tom and me for many weary miles of our tramp through the wilderness. I have often thought since that that march of the volunteer company to join Clark at the Falls of the Ohio was a superb example of confidence in one man, and scarce to be equalled in history.

In less than a week we of Captain Harrod's little company stood on a forest-clad bank, gazing spellbound at the troubled waters of a mighty river. That river was the Ohio, and it divided us from the strange north country whence the savages came. From below, the angry voice of the Great Falls cried out to us unceasingly. Smoke rose through the tree-tops of the island opposite, and through the new gaps of its forest cabins could be seen. And presently, at a signal from us, a big flatboat left its shore, swung out and circled on the polished current, and grounded at length in the mud below us. A dozen tall boatmen, buckskin-clad, dropped the big oars and leaped out on the bank with a yell of greeting. At the head of them was a man of huge frame, and long, light hair falling down over the collar of his hunting shirt. He wrung Captain Harrod's hand.

"That there's Simon Kenton, Davy," said Cowan, as we stood watching them.

I ran forward for a better look at the backwoods Hercules, the tales of whose prowess had helped to while

away many a winter's night in Harrodstown Station. Big-featured and stern, yet he had the kindly eye of the most indomitable of frontier fighters, and I doubted not the truth of what was said of him — that he could kill any redskin hand-to-hand.

"Clark's thar," he was saying to Captain Harrod. "God knows what his pluck is. He ain't said a word."

"He doesn't say whar he's going?" said Harrod.

"Not a notion," answered Kenton. "He's the greatest man to keep his mouth shut I ever saw. He kept at the governor of Virginny till he gave him twelve hundred pounds in Continentals and power to raise troops. Then Clark fetched a circle for Fort Pitt, raised some troops thar and in Virginny and some about Red Stone, and come down the Ohio here with 'em in a lot of flatboats. Now that ye've got here the Kentucky boys is all in. I come over with Montgomery, and Dillard's here from the Holston country with a company."

"Well," said Captain Harrod, "I reckon we'll report."

I went among the first boat-load, and as the men strained against the current, Kenton explained that Colonel Clark had brought a number of emigrants down the river with him; that he purposed to leave them on this island with a little force, that they might raise corn and provisions during the summer; and that he had called the place Corn Island.

"Sure, there's the Colonel himself," cried Terence McCann, who was in the bow, and indeed I could pick out the familiar figure among the hundred frontiersmen that gathered among the stumps at the landing-place. As our keel scraped they gave a shout that rattled in the forest behind them, and Clark came down to the water-side.

"I knew that Harrodstown wouldn't fail me," he said, and called every man by name as we waded ashore. When I came splashing along after Tom he pulled me from the water with his two hands.

"Colonel," said Terence McCann, "we've brought ye a dhrummer b'y."

"We'd have no luck at all without him," said Cowan, and the men laughed.

"Can you walk an hundred miles without food, Davy?" asked Colonel Clark, eying me gravely.

"Faith he's lean as a wolf, and no stomach to hinder him," said Terence, seeing me look troubled. "I'll not be missing the bit of food the likes of him would eat."

"And as for the heft of him," added Cowan, "Mac and I'll not feel it."

Colonel Clark laughed. "Well, boys," he said, "if you must have him, you must. His Excellency gave me no instructions about a drummer, but we'll take you, Davy."

In those days he was a man that wasted no time, was Colonel Clark, and within the hour our little detachment had joined the others, felling trees and shaping the log-ends for the cabins. That night, as Tom and Cowan and McCann and James Ray lay around their fire, taking a well-earned rest, a man broke excitedly into the light with a kettle-shaped object balanced on his head, which he set down in front of us. The man proved to be Swein Poulsson, and the object a big drum, and he straightway began to beat upon it a tattoo with improvised drumsticks.

"A Red Stone man," he cried, "a Red Stone man, he have it in the flatboat. It is for Tavy."

"The saints be good to us," said Terence, "if it isn't the King's own drum he has." And sure enough, on the head of it gleamed the royal arms of England, and on the other side, as we turned it over, the device of a regiment. They flung the sling about my neck, and the next day, when the little army drew up for parade among the stumps, there I was at the end of the line, and prouder than any man in the ranks. And Colonel Clark coming to my end of the line paused and smiled and patted me kindly on the cheek.

"Have you put this man on the roll, Harrod?" says he.

"No, Colonel," answers Captain Harrod, amid the laughter of the men at my end.

"What!" says the Colonel, "what an oversight! From this day he is drummer boy and orderly to the Commander-in-chief. Beat the retreat, my man."

I did my best, and as the men broke ranks they crowded around me, laughing and joking, and Cowan picked me up, drum and all, and carried me off, I rapping furiously the while.

And so I became a kind of handy boy for the whole regiment from the Colonel down, for I was willing and glad to work. I cooked the Colonel's meals, roasting the turkey breasts and saddles of venison that the hunters brought in from the mainland, and even made him journey-cake, a trick which Polly Ann had taught me. And when I went about the island, if a man were loafing, he would seize his axe and cry, "Here's Davy, he'll tell the Colonel on me." Thanks to the jokes of Terence McCann, I gained an owl-like reputation for wisdom amongst these superstitious backwoodsmen, and they came verily to believe that upon my existence depended the success of the campaign. But day after day passed, and no sign from Colonel Clark of his intentions.

"There's a good lad," said Terence. "He'll be telling us where we're going."

I was asked the same question by a score or more, but Colonel Clark kept his own counsel. He himself was everywhere during the days that followed, superintending the work on the blockhouse we were building, and eying the men. Rumor had it that he was sorting out the sheep from the goats, silently choosing those who were to remain on the island and those who were to take part in the campaign.

At length the blockhouse stood finished amid the yellow stumps of the great trees, the trunks of which were in its walls. And suddenly the order went forth for the men to draw up in front of it by companies, with the families of the emigrants behind them. It was a picture to fix itself in a boy's mind, and one that I have never forgotten. The line of backwoodsmen, as fine a lot of men as I ever wish to see, bronzed by the June sun, strong and

tireless as the wild animals of the forest, stood expectant with rifles grounded. And beside the tallest, at the end of the line, was a diminutive figure with a drum hung in front of it. The early summer wind rustled in the forest, and the never ending song of the Great Falls sounded from afar. Apart, square-shouldered and indomitable, stood a young man of twenty-six.

"My friends and neighbors," he said in a firm voice, "there is scarce a man standing among you to-day who has not suffered at the hands of savages. Some of you have seen wives and children killed before your eyes — or dragged into captivity. None of you can to-day call the home for which he has risked so much his own. And who, I ask you, is to blame for this hideous war? Whose gold is it that buys guns and powder and lead to send the Shawnee and the Iroquois and Algonquin on the war-path?"

He paused, and a hoarse murmur of anger ran along the ranks.

"Whose gold but George's, by the grace of God King of Great Britain and Ireland? And what minions distribute it? Abbott at Kaskaskia, for one, and Hamilton at Detroit, the Hair Buyer, for another!"

When he spoke Hamilton's name his voice was nearly drowned by imprecations.

"Silence!" cried Clark, sternly, and they were silent. "My friends, the best way for a man to defend himself is to maim his enemy. One year since, when you did me the honor to choose me Commander-in-chief of your militia in Kentucky, I sent two scouts to Kaskaskia. A dozen years ago the French owned that place, and St. Vincent, and Detroit, and the people there are still French. My men brought back word that the French feared the Long Knives, as the Indians call us. On the first of October I went to Virginia, and some of you thought again that I had deserted you. I went to Williamsburg and wrestled with Governor Patrick Henry and his council, with Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Mason and Mr. Wythe. Virginia had no troops to send us, and her men were fighting barefoot with

Washington against the armies of the British king. But the governor gave me twelve hundred pounds in paper, and with it I have raised the little force that we have here. And with it we will carry the war into Hamilton's country. On the swift waters of this great river which flows past us have come tidings to-day, and God Himself has sent them. To-morrow would have been too late. The ships and armies of the French king are on their way across the ocean to help us fight the tyrant, and this is the news that we bear to the Kaskaskias. When they hear this, the French of those towns will not fight against us. My friends, we are going to conquer an empire for liberty, and I can look onward," he cried in a burst of inspired eloquence, sweeping his arm to the northward toward the forests on the far side of the Ohio, "I can look onward to the day when these lands will be filled with the cities of a Great Republic. And who among you will falter at such a call?"

There was a brief silence, and then a shout went up from the ranks that drowned the noise of the Falls, and many fell into antics, some throwing their coonskin hats in the air, and others cursing and scalping Hamilton in mockery, while I pounded on the drum with all my might. But when we had broken ranks the rumor was whispered about that the Holston company had not cheered, and indeed the rest of the day these men went about plainly morose and discontented, — some saying openly (and with much justice, though we failed to see it then) that they had their own families and settlements to defend from the Southern Indians and Chickamauga bandits, and could not undertake Kentucky's fight at that time. And when the enthusiasm had burned away a little the disaffection spread, and some even of the Kentuckians began to murmur against Clark, for faith or genius was needful to inspire men to his plan. One of the malcontents from Boonesboro came to our fire to argue.

"He's mad as a medicine man, is Clark, to go into that country with less than two hundred rifles. And he'll force us, will he? I'd as lief have the King for a master."

He brought every man in our circle to his feet, — Ray, McCann, Cowan, and Tom. But Tom was nearest, and words not coming easily to him he fell on the Boonesboro man instead, and they fought it out for ten minutes in the firelight with half the regiment around them. At the end of it, when the malcontents were carrying their champion away, they were stopped suddenly at the sight of one bursting through the circle into the light, and a hush fell upon the quarrel. It was Colonel Clark.

"Are you hurt, McChesney?" he demanded.

"I reckon not much, Colonel," said Tom, grinning, as he wiped his face.

"If any man deserts this camp to-night," cried Colonel Clark, swinging around, "I swear by God to have him chased and brought back and punished as he deserves. Captain Harrod, set a guard."

I pass quickly over the rest of the incident. How the Holston men and some others escaped in the night in spite of our guard, and swam the river on logs. How at dawn we found them gone, and Kenton and Harrod and brave Captain Montgomery set out in pursuit, with Cowan and Tom and Ray. All day they rode, relentless, and the next evening returned with but eight weary and sullen fugitives of all those who had deserted.

The next day the sun rose on a smiling world, the polished reaches of the river golden mirrors reflecting the forest's green. And we were astir with the light, preparing for our journey into the unknown country. At seven we embarked by companies in the flatboats, waving a farewell to those who were to be left behind. Some stayed through inclination and disaffection: others because Colonel Clark did not deem them equal to the task. But Swein Poulsson came. With tears in his little blue eyes he had begged the Colonel to take him, and I remember him well on that June morning, his red face perspiring under the white bristles of his hair as he strained at the big oar. For we must needs pull a mile up the stream ere we could reach the passage in which to shoot downward to the Falls. Suddenly Pouls-

son dropped his handle, causing the boat to swing round in the stream, while the men damned him. Paying them no attention, he stood pointing into the blinding disk of the sun. Across the edge of it a piece was bitten out in blackness.

"Mein Gott!" he cried, "the world is being ended just now."

"The holy saints remember us this day!" said McCann, missing a stroke to cross himself. "Will ye pull, ye damned Dutchman? Or we'll be the first to slide into hell. This is no kind of a place at all, at all."

By this time the men all along the line of boats had seen it, and many faltered. Clark's voice could be heard across the waters urging them to pull, while the bows swept across the current. They obeyed him, but steadily the blackness ate out the light, and a weird gloaming overspread the scene. River and forest became stern, the men silent. The more ignorant were in fear of a cataclysm, the others taking it for an omen.

"Shucks!" said Tom, when appealed to, "I've seed it afore, and it come all right again."

Clark's boat rounded the shoal: next our turn came, and then the whole line was gliding down the river, the rising roar of the angry waters with which we were soon to grapple coming to us with an added grimness. And now but a faint rim of light saved us from utter darkness. Big Bill Cowan, undaunted in war, stared at me with fright written on his face.

"And what 'll ye think of it, Davy?" he said.

I glanced at the figure of our commander in the boat ahead, and took courage.

"It's Hamilton's scalp hanging by a lock," I answered, pointing to what was left of the sun. "Soon it will be off, and then we'll have light again."

To my surprise he snatched me from the thwart and held me up with a shout, and I saw Colonel Clark turn and look back.

"Davy says the Ha'r Buyer's sculp hangs by the lock, boys," he shouted, pointing at the sun.

The word was cried from boat to boat, and we could see the men pointing upwards and laughing. And then, as the light began to grow, we were in the midst of the tumbling waters, the steersmen straining now right, now left, to keep the prows in the smooth reaches between rock and bar. We gained the still pools below, the sun came out once more and smiled on the landscape, and the spirits of the men, reviving, burst all bounds.

Thus I earned my reputation as a prophet.

Four days and nights we rowed down the great river, our oars double-manned, for fear that our coming might be heralded to the French towns. We made our first camp on a green little island at the mouth of the Cherokee, as we then called the Tennessee, and there I set about cooking a turkey for Colonel Clark, which Ray had shot. Chancing to look up, I saw the Colonel himself watching me.

"How is this, Davy?" said he. "I hear that you have saved my army for me before we have met the enemy."

"I did not know it, sir," I answered.

"Well," said he, "if you have learned to turn an evil omen into a good sign, you know more than some generals. What ails you now?"

"There's a pirogue, sir," I cried, staring and pointing.

"Where?" said he, alert all at once. "Here, McChesney, take a crew and put out after them."

He had scarcely spoken ere Tom and his men were rowing into the sunset, the whole of our little army watching from the bank. Presently the other boat was seen coming back with ours, and five strange woodsmen stepped ashore, our men pressing around them. But Clark flew to the spot, the men giving back.

"Who's the leader here?" he demanded.

A tall man stepped forward.

"I am," said he, bewildered but defiant.

"Your name?"

"John Duff," he answered, as though against his will.

"Your business?"

"Hunters," said Duff; "and I reckon we're in our rights."

"I'll judge of that," said our Colonel. "Where are you from?"

"That's no secret, neither. Kaskasky, ten days gone."

At that there was a murmur of surprise from our companies. Clark turned.

"Get your men back," he said to the captains, who stood about them. And all of them not moving: "Get your men back, I say. I'll have it known who's in command here."

At that the men retired. "Who commands at Kaskaskia?" he demanded of Duff.

"Monseer Rocheblave, a Frenchy holding a British commission," said Duff. "And the British Governor Abbott has left Post St. Vincent and gone to Detroit. Who be you?" he added suspiciously. "Be you Rebels?"

"Colonel Clark is my name, and I am in the service of the Commonwealth of Virginia."

Duff uttered an exclamatory oath and his manner changed. "Be you Clark?" he said with respect. "And you're going after Kaskasky? Wal, the mility is prime, and the Injun scouts is keeping a good lookout. But, Colonel, I'll tell ye something: the Frenchies is etarnal afeard of the Long Knives. My God! they've got the notion that if you ketch 'em you'll burn and scalp 'em same as the Red Sticks."

"Good," was all that Clark answered.

"I reckon I don't know much about what the Rebels is fighting for," said John Duff; "but I like your looks, Colonel, and wharever you're going there'll be a fight. Me and my boys would kinder like to go along."

Clark did not answer at once, but looked John Duff and his men over carefully.

"Will you take the oath of allegiance to Virginia and the Continental Congress?" he asked at length.

"I reckon it won't pizen us," said John Duff.

"Hold up your hands," said Clark, and they took the oath. "Now, my men," said he, "you will be assigned to companies. Does any one among you know the old French trail from Massacre to Kaskaskia?"

"Why," exclaimed John Duff, "why, Johnny Saunders here can tread it in the dark like the road to the grog-shop."

John Saunders, loose-limbed, grinning sheepishly, shuffled forward, and Clark shot a dozen questions at him one after another. Yes, the trail had been blazed the Lord knew how long ago by the French, and given up when they left Massacre.

"Look you," said Clark to him, "I am not a man to stand trifling. If there is any deception in this, you will be shot without mercy."

"And good riddance," said John Duff. "Boys, we're Rebels now. Steer clear of the Ha'r Buyer."

CHAPTER XIII

KASKASKIA

For one more day we floated downward on the face of the waters between the forest walls of the wilderness, and at length we landed in a little gully on the north shore of the river, and there we hid our boats.

"Davy," said Colonel Clark, "let's walk about a bit. Tell me where you learned to be so silent?"

"My father did not like to be talked to," I answered, "except when he was drinking."

He gave me a strange look. Many the stroll I took with him afterwards, when he sought to relax himself from the cares which the campaign had put upon him. This night was still and clear, the west all yellow with the departing light, and the mists coming on the river. And presently, as we strayed down the shore we came upon a strange sight, the same being a huge fort rising from the waterside, all overgrown with brush and saplings and tall weeds. The palisades that held its earthenwork were rotten and crumbling, and the mighty bastions of its corners sliding away. Behind the fort, at the end farthest from the river, we came upon gravelled walks hidden by the rank growth, where the soldiers of his most Christian Majesty once paraded. Lost in thought, Clark stood on the parapet, watching the water gliding by until the darkness hid it, — nay, until the stars came and made golden dimples upon its surface. But as we went back to the camp again he told me how the French had tried once to conquer this vast country and failed, leaving to the Spaniards the endless stretch beyond the Mississippi called Louisiana, and this part to the English. And he told me likewise that this fort in the days of its glory had been called *Massacre*, from

a bloody event which had happened there more than threescore years before.

"Threescore years!" I exclaimed, longing to see the men of this race which had set up these monuments only to abandon them.

"Ay, lad," he answered, "before you or I were born, and before our fathers were born, the French missionaries and soldiers threaded this wilderness. And they called this river 'La Belle Rivière,' — the Beautiful River."

"And shall I see that race at Kaskaskia?" I asked, wondering.

"That you shall," he cried, with a force that left no doubt in my mind.

In the morning we broke camp and started off for the strange place which we hoped to capture. A hundred miles it was across the trackless wilds, and each man was ordered to carry on his back provisions for four days only.

"*Herr Gott!*" cried Swein Poulsson, from the bottom of a flatboat, whence he was tossing out venison flitches, "four day, und vat is it ve eat then?"

"Frenchies, sure," said Terence; "there'll be plenty av thim for a season. Faith, I do hear they're tinder as lambs."

"You'll no set tooth in the Frenchies," the pessimistic McAndrew put in, "wi' five thousand redskins aboot, and they lying in wait. The Colonel's no vera mindful of that, I'm thinking."

"Will ye hush, ye ill-omened hound!" cried Cowan, angrily. "Pitch him in the crick, Mac!"

Tom was diverted from this duty by a loud quarrel between Captain Harrod and five men of the company who wanted scout duty, and on the heels of that came another turmoil occasioned by Cowan's dropping my drum into the water. While he and McCann and Tom were fishing it out, Colonel Clark himself appeared, quelled the mutiny that Harrod had on his hands, and bade the men sternly to get into ranks.

"What foolishness is this?" he said, eying the dripping drum.

"Sure, Colonel," said McCann, swinging it on his back, "we'd have no heart in us at Kaskasky widout the rattle of it in our ears. Bill Cowan and me will not be feeling the heft of it bechune us."

"Get into ranks," said the Colonel, amusement struggling with the anger in his face as he turned on his heel. His wisdom well knew when to humor a man, and when to chastise.

"Arrah," said Terence, as he took his place, "I'd as soon l'ave me gun behind as Davy and the dhrum."

Methinks I can see now, as I write, the long file of woodsmen with their swinging stride, planting one foot before the other, even as the Indian himself threaded the wilderness. Though my legs were short, I had both sinew and training, and now I was at one end of the line and now at the other. And often with a laugh some giant would hand his gun to a neighbor, swing me to his shoulder, and so give me a lift for a weary mile or two; and perchance whisper to me to put down my hand into the wallet of his shirt, where I would find a choice morsel which he had saved for his supper. Sometimes I trotted beside the Colonel himself, listening as he talked to this man or that, and thus I got the gravest notion of the daring of this undertaking, and of the dangers ahead of us. This north country was infested with Indians, allies of the English and friends of the French their subjects; and the fact was never for an instant absent from our minds that our little band might at any moment run into a thousand warriors, be overpowered and massacred; or, worst of all, that our coming might have been heralded to Kaskaskia.

For three days we marched in the green shade of the primeval wood, nor saw the sky save in blue patches here and there. Again we toiled for hours through the coffee-colored waters of the swamps. But the third day brought us to the first of those strange clearings which the French call prairies, where the long grass ripples like a lake in the summer wind. Here we first knew raging thirst, and longed for the loam-specked water we had scorned, as our tired feet tore through the grass. For Saunders, our

guide, took a line across the open in plain sight of any eye that might be watching from the forest cover. But at length our column wavered and halted by reason of some disturbance at the head of it. Conjectures in our company, the rear guard, became rife at once.

"Run, Davy darlin,' an' see what the throuble is," said Terence.

Nothing loath, I made my way to the head of the column, where Bowman's company had broken ranks and stood in a ring up to their thighs in the grass. In the centre of the ring, standing on one foot before our angry Colonel, was Saunders.

"Now, what does this mean?" demanded Clark; "my eye is on you, and you've boxed the compass in this last hour."

Saunders' jaw dropped.

"I'm guiding you right," he answered, with that sullenness which comes to his kind from fear, "but a man will slip his bearings sometimes in this country."

Clark's eyes shot fire, and he brought down the stock of his rifle with a thud.

"By the eternal God!" he cried, "I believe you are a traitor. I've been watching you every step, and you've acted strangely this morning."

"Ay, ay," came from the men round him.

"Silence!" cried Clark, and turned again to the cowering Saunders. "You pretend to know the way to Kaskaskia, you bring us to the middle of the Indian country where we may be wiped out at any time, and now you have the damned effrontery to tell me that you have lost your way. I am a man of my word," he added with a vibrant intensity, and pointed to the limbs of a giant tree which stood at the edge of the distant forest. "I will give you half an hour, but as I live, I will leave you hanging there."

The man's brown hand trembled as he clutched his rifle barrel.

"'Tis a hard country, sir," he said. "I'm lost. I swear it on the evangels."

"A hard country!" cried Clark. "A man would have to walk over it but once to know it. I believe you are a damned traitor and perjurer, — in spite of your oath, a British spy."

Saunders wiped the sweat from his brow on his buckskin sleeve.

"I reckon I could get the trace, Colonel, if you'd let me go a little way into the prairie."

"Half an hour," said Clark, "and you'll not go alone." Sweeping his eye over Bowman's company, he picked out a man here and a man there to go with Saunders. Then his eye lighted on me. "Where's McChesney?" he said. "Fetch McChesney."

I ran to get Tom, and seven of them went away, with Saunders in the middle, Clark watching them like a hawk, while the men sat down in the grass to wait. Fifteen minutes went by, and twenty, and twenty-five, and Clark was calling for a rope, when some one caught sight of the squad in the distance returning at a run. And when they came within hail it was Saunders' voice we heard, shouting brokenly: —

"I've struck it, Colonel, I've struck the trace. There's a pecan at the edge of the bottom with my own blaze on it."

"May you never be as near death again," said the Colonel, grimly, as he gave the order to march.

The fourth day passed, and we left behind us the patches of forest and came into the open prairie, — as far as the eye could reach a long, level sea of waving green. The scanty provisions ran out, hunger was added to the pangs of thirst and weariness, and here and there in the straggling file discontent smouldered and angry undertone was heard. Kaskaskia was somewhere to the west and north; but how far? Clark had misled them. And in addition it were foolish to believe that the garrison had not been warned. English soldiers and French militia and Indian allies stood ready for our reception. Of such was the talk as we lay down in the grass under the stars on the fifth night. For in the rank and file an empty stomach is not hopeful.

The next morning we took up our march silently with the dawn, the prairie grouse whirring ahead of us. At last, as afternoon drew on, a dark line of green edged the prairie to the westward, and our spirits rose. From mouth to mouth ran the word that these were the woods which fringed the bluff above Kaskaskia itself. We pressed ahead, and the destiny of the new Republic for which we had fought made us walk unseen. Excitement keyed us high; we reached the shade, plunged into it, and presently came out staring at the bastioned corners of a fort which rose from the centre of a clearing. It had once defended the place, but now stood abandoned and dismantled. Beyond it, at the edge of the bluff, we halted, astonished. The sun was falling in the west, and below us was the goal for the sight of which we had suffered so much. At our feet, across the wooded bottom, was the Kaskaskia River, and beyond, the peaceful little French village with its low houses and orchards and gardens colored by the touch of the evening light. In the centre of it stood a stone church with its belfry; but our searching eyes alighted on the spot to the southward of it, near the river. There stood a rambling stone building with the shingles of its roof weathered black, and all around it a palisade of pointed sticks thrust in the ground, and with a pair of gates and watch-towers. Drooping on its staff was the standard of England. North and south of the village the emerald common gleamed in the slanting light, speckled red and white and black by grazing cattle. Here and there, in untidy brown patches, were Indian settlements, and far away to the westward the tawny Father of Waters gleamed through the cottonwoods.

Through the waning day the men lay resting under the trees, talking in undertones. Some cleaned their rifles, and others lost themselves in conjectures of the attack. But Clark himself, tireless, stood with folded arms gazing at the scene below, and the sunlight on his face illumined him (to the lad standing at his side) as the servant of destiny. At length, at eventide, the sweet-toned bell of the little cathedral rang to vespers, — a gentle message of

peace to war. Colonel Clark looked into my upturned face.

"Davy, do you know what day this is?" he asked.

"No, sir," I answered.

"Two years have gone since the bells pealed for the birth of a new nation — your nation, Davy, and mine — the nation that is to be the refuge of the oppressed of this earth — the nation which is to be made of all peoples, out of all time. And this land for which you and I shall fight to-night will belong to it, and the lands beyond," he pointed to the west, "until the sun sets on the sea again." He put his hand on my head. "You will remember this when I am dead and gone," he said.

I was silent, awed by the power of his words.

Darkness fell, and still we waited, impatient for the order. And when at last it came the men bustled hither and thither to find their commands, and we picked our way on the unseen road that led down the bluff, our hearts thumping. The lights of the village twinkled at our feet, and now and then a voice from below was caught and borne upward to us. Once another noise startled us, followed by an exclamation, "*Donnerblitzen*" and a volley of low curses from the company. Poor Swein Poulsson had loosed a stone, which had taken a reverberating flight riverward.

We reached the bottom, and the long file turned and hurried silently northward, searching for a crossing. I try to recall my feelings as I trotted beside the tall forms that loomed above me in the night. The sense of protection they gave me stripped me of fear, and I was not troubled with that. My thoughts were chiefly on Polly Ann and the child we had left in the fort now so far to the south of us, and in my fancy I saw her cheerful, ever helpful to those around her, despite the load that must rest on her heart. I saw her simple joy at our return. But should we return? My chest tightened, and I sped along the ranks to Harrod's company and caught Tom by the wrist.

"Davy," he murmured, and, seizing my hand in his strong grip, pulled me along with him. For it was not

given to him to say what he felt; but as I hurried to keep pace with his stride, Polly Ann's words rang in my ears, "Davy, take care of my Tom," and I knew that he, too, was thinking of her.

A hail aroused me, the sound of a loud rapping, and I saw in black relief a cabin ahead. The door opened, a man came out with a horde of children cowering at his heels, a volley of frightened words pouring from his mouth in a strange tongue. John Duff was plying him with questions in French, and presently the man became calmer and lapsed into broken English.

"Kaskaskia — yes, she is prepare. Many spy is gone out — cross *la rivière*. But now they all sleep."

Even as he spoke a shout came faintly from the distant town.

"What is that?" demanded Clark, sharply.

The man shrugged his shoulders. "*Une fête des nègres, peut-être*, — the negro, he dance maybe."

"Are you the ferryman?" said Clark.

"*Oui* — I have some boat."

We crossed the hundred and fifty yards of sluggish water, squad by squad, and in the silence of the night stood gathered, expectant, on the farther bank. Midnight was at hand. Commands were passed about, and men ran this way and that, jostling one another to find their places in a new order. But at length our little force stood in three detachments on the river's bank, their captains repeating again and again the part which each was to play, that none might mistake his duty. The two larger ones were to surround the town, while the picked force under Simon Kenton himself was to storm the fort. Should he gain it by surprise and without battle, three shots were to be fired in quick succession, the other detachments were to start the war-whoop, while Duff and some with a smattering of French were to run up and down the streets proclaiming that every *habitan* who left his house would be shot. No provision being made for the drummer boy (I had left my drum on the heights above), I chose the favored column, at the head of which Tom and Cowan

and Ray and McCann were striding behind Kenton and Colonel Clark. Not a word was spoken. There was a kind of cow-path that rose and fell and twisted along the river-bank. This we followed, and in ten minutes we must have covered the mile to the now darkened village. The starlight alone outlined against the sky the houses of it as we climbed the bank. Then we halted, breathless, in a street, but there was no sound save that of the crickets and the frogs. Forward again, and twisting a corner, we beheld the indented edge of the stockade. Still no hail, nor had our moccasined feet betrayed us as we sought the river side of the fort and drew up before the big river gates of it. Simon Kenton bore against them, and tried the little postern that was set there, but both were fast. The spikes towered a dozen feet overhead.

"Quick!" muttered Clark, "a light man to go over and open the postern."

Before I guessed what was in his mind, Cowan seized me.

"Send the lad, Colonel," said he.

"Ay, ay," said Simon Kenton, hoarsely.

In a second Tom was on Kenton's shoulders, and they passed me up with as little trouble as though I had been my own drum. Feverishly searching with my foot for Tom's shoulder, I seized the spikes at the top, clambered over them, paused, surveyed the empty area below me, destitute even of a sentry, and then let myself down with the aid of the cross-bars inside. As I was feeling vainly for the bolt of the postern, rays of light suddenly shot my shadow against the door. And next, as I got my hand on the bolt-head, I felt the weight of another on my shoulder, and a voice behind me said in English: —

"In the devil's name!"

I gave the one frantic pull, the bolt slipped, and caught again. Then Colonel Clark's voice rang out in the night: —

"Open the gate! Open the gate in the name of Virginia and the Continental Congress!"

Before I could cry out the man gave a grunt, leaned his gun against the gate, and tore my fingers from the

bolt-handle. Astonishment robbed me of breath as he threw open the postern.

"In the name of the Continental Congress," he cried, and seized his gun. Clark and Kenton stepped in instantly, no doubt as astounded as I, and had the man in their grasp.

"Who are you?" said Clark.

"Name o' Skene, from Pennsylvanya," said the man, "and by the Lord God ye shall have the fort."

"You looked for us?" said Clark.

"Faith, never less," said the Pennsylvanian. "The one sentry is at the main gate."

"And the governor?"

"Rocheblave?" said the Pennsylvanian. "He sleeps yonder in the old Jesuit house in the middle."

Clark turned to Tom McChesney, who was at his elbow.

"Corporal!" said he, swiftly, "secure the sentry at the main gate! You," he added, turning to the Pennsylvanian, "lead us to the governor. But mind, if you betray me, I'll be the first to blow out your brains."

The man seized a lantern and made swiftly over the level ground until the rubble-work of the old Jesuit house showed in the light, nor Clark nor any of them stopped to think of the danger our little handful ran at the mercy of a stranger. The house was silent. We halted, and Clark threw himself against the rude panels of the door, which gave to inward blackness. Our men filled the little passage, and suddenly we found ourselves in a low-ceiled room in front of a great four-poster bed. And in it, upright, blinking at the light, were two odd Frenchified figures in tasselled nightcaps. Astonishment and anger and fear struggled in the faces of Monsieur de Rocheblave and his lady. A regard for truth compels me to admit that it was madame who first found her voice, and no uncertain one it was.

First came a shriek that might have roused the garrison.

"Villains! Murderers! Outragers of decency!" she cried with spirit, pouring a heap of invectives, now in

French, now in English, much to the discomfiture of our backwoodsmen, who peered at her helplessly.

"*Nom du diable!*" cried the commandant, when his lady's breath was gone, "what does this mean?"

"It means, sir," answered Clark, promptly, "that you are my prisoner."

"And who are you?" gasped the commandant.

"George Rogers Clark, Colonel in the service of the Commonwealth of Virginia." He held out his hand restrainingly, for the furious Monsieur Rocheblave made an attempt to rise. "You will oblige me by remaining in bed, sir, for a moment."

"*Coquins! Canailles! Cochons!*" shrieked the lady.

"Madame," said Colonel Clark, politely, "the necessities of war are often cruel."

He made a bow, and paying no further attention to the torrent of her reproaches or the threats of the helpless commandant, he calmly searched the room with the lantern, and finally pulled out from under the bed a metal despatch box. Then he lighted a candle in a brass candlestick that stood on the simple walnut dresser, and bowed again to the outraged couple in the four-poster.

"Now, sir," he said, "you may dress. We will retire."

"*Pardieu!*" said the commandant in French, "a hundred thousand thanks."

We had scarcely closed the bedroom door when three shots were heard.

"The signal!" exclaimed Clark.

Immediately a pandemonium broke on the silence of the night that must have struck cold terror in the hearts of the poor Creoles sleeping in their beds. The war-whoop, the scalp halloo in the dead of the morning, with the hideous winding notes of them that reached the bluff beyond and echoed back, were enough to frighten a man from his senses. In the intervals, in backwoods French, John Duff and his companions were heard in terrifying tones crying out to the *habitans* to venture out at the peril of their lives. Within the fort a score of lights flew up and down like will-o'-the-wisps, and Colonel Clark, standing on the steps

of the governor's house, gave out his orders and despatched his messengers. Me he sent speeding through the village to tell Captain Bowman to patrol the outskirts of the town, that no runner might get through to warn Fort Chartres and Cohos, as some called Cahokia. None stirred save the few Indians left in the place, and these were brought before Clark in the fort, sullen and defiant, and put in the guard-house there. And Rocheblave, when he appeared, was no better, and was put back in his house under guard.

As for the papers in the despatch box, they revealed I know not what briberies of the savage nations and plans of the English. But of other papers we found none, though there must have been more. Madame Rocheblave was suspected of having hidden some in the inviolable portions of her dress.

At length the cocks crowing for day proclaimed the morning, and while yet the blue shadow of the bluff was on the town, Colonel Clark sallied out of the gate and walked abroad. Strange it seemed that war had come to this village, so peaceful and remote. And even stranger it seemed to me to see these Arcadian homes in the midst of the fierce wilderness. The little houses with their sloping roofs and wide porches, the gardens ablaze with color, the neat palings, — all were a restful sight for our weary eyes. And now I scarcely knew our commander. For we had not gone far ere, timidly, a door opened and a mild-visaged man, in the simple workaday smock that the French wore, stood, hesitating, on the steps. The odd thing was that he should have bowed to Clark, who was dressed no differently from Bowman and Harrod and Duff; and the man's voice trembled piteously as he spoke. It needed not John Duff to tell us that he was pleading for the lives of his family.

"He will sell himself as a slave if your Excellency will spare them," said Duff, translating.

But Clark stared at the man sternly.

"I will tell them my plans at the proper time," he said, and when Duff had translated this the man turned and

went silently into his house again, closing the door behind him. And before we had traversed the village the same thing had happened many times. We gained the fort again, I wondering greatly why he had not reassured these simple people. It was Bowman who asked this question, he being closer to Clark than any of the other captains. Clark said nothing then, and began to give out directions for the day. But presently he called the Captain aside.

"Bowman," I heard him say, "we have one hundred and fifty men to hold a province bigger than the whole of France, and filled with treacherous tribes in the King's pay. I must work out the problem for myself."

Bowman was silent. Clark, with that touch which made men love him and die for him, laid his hand on the Captain's shoulder.

"Have the men called in by detachments," he said, "and fed. God knows they must be hungry, — and you."

Suddenly I remembered that he himself had had nothing. Running around the commandant's house to the kitchen door, I came unexpectedly upon Swein Poulsson, who was face to face with the linsey-woolsey-clad figure of Monsieur Rocheblave's negro cook. The early sun cast long shadows of them on the ground.

"By tam," my friend was saying, "so I vill eat. I am choost like an ox for three days, und chew grass. Prairie grass, is it?"

"*Mo pas capab'*, Michié," said the cook, with a terrified roll of his white eyes.

"*Herr Gott!*" cried Swein Poulsson, "I am red face. *Aber Herr Gott*, I thank thee I am not a nigger. Und my hair is bristles, yes. Davy" (spying me), "I thank *Herr Gott* it is not vool. Let us in the kitchen go."

"I am come to get something for the Colonel's breakfast," said I, pushing past the slave, through the open doorway. Swein Poulsson followed, and here I struck another contradiction in his strange nature. He helped me light the fire in the great stone chimney-place, and we soon had a pot of hominy on the crane, and turning on the spit a piece of buffalo steak which we found in the larder. Nor did a

mouthful pass his lips until I had sped away with a steaming portion to find the Colonel. By this time the men had broken into the storehouse, and the open place was dotted with their breakfast fires. Clark was standing alone by the flagstaff, his face careworn. But he smiled as he saw me coming.

"What's this?" says he.

"Your breakfast, sir," I answered. I set down the plate and the pot before him and pressed the pewter spoon into his hand.

"Davy," said he.

"Sir?" said I.

"What did you have for your breakfast?"

My lip trembled, for I was very hungry, and the rich steam from the hominy was as much as I could stand. Then the Colonel took me by the arms, as gently as a woman might, set me down on the ground beside him, and taking a spoonful of the hominy forced it between my lips. I was near to fainting at the taste of it. Then he took a bit himself, and divided the buffalo steak with his own hands. And when from the camp-fires they perceived the Colonel and the drummer boy eating together in plain sight of all, they gave a rousing cheer.

"Swein Poulsson helped get your breakfast, sir, and would eat nothing either," I ventured.

"Davy," said Colonel Clark, gravely, "I hope you will be younger when you are twenty."

"I hope I shall be bigger, sir," I answered gravely.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW THE KASKASKIANS WERE MADE CITIZENS

NEVER before had such a day dawned upon Kaskaskia. With July fierceness the sun beat down upon the village, but man nor woman nor child stirred from the darkened houses. What they awaited at the hands of the Long Knives they knew not, — captivity, torture, death perhaps. Through the deserted streets stalked a squad of backwoodsmen headed by John Duff and two American traders found in the town, who were bestirring themselves in our behalf, knocking now at this door and anon at that.

"The Colonel bids you come to the fort," he said, and was gone.

The church bell rang with slow, ominous strokes, far different from its gentle vesper peal of yesterday. Two companies were drawn up in the sun before the old Jesuit house, and presently through the gate a procession came, grave and mournful. The tone of it was sombre in the white glare, for men had donned their best (as they thought) for the last time, — cloth of camlet and Cadiz and Limbourg, white cotton stockings, and brass-buckled shoes. They came like captives led to execution. But at their head a figure held our eye, — a figure that spoke of dignity and courage, of trials borne for others. It was the village priest in his robes. He had a receding forehead and a strong, pointed chin; but benevolence was in the curve of his great nose. I have many times since seen his type of face in the French prints. He and his flock halted before our young Colonel, even as the citizens of Calais in a bygone century must have stood before the English king.

The scene comes back to me. On the one side, not the warriors of a nation that has made its mark in war,

but peaceful peasants who had sought this place for its remoteness from persecution, to live and die in harmony with all mankind. On the other, the sinewy advance guard of a race that knows not peace, whose goddess of liberty carries in her hand a sword. The plough might have been graven on our arms, but always the rifle.

The silence of the trackless wilds reigned while Clark gazed at them sternly. And when he spoke it was with the voice of a conqueror, and they listened as the conquered listen, with heads bowed — all save the priest.

Clark told them first that they had been given a false and a wicked notion of the American cause, and he spoke of the tyranny of the English king, which had become past endurance to a free people. As for ourselves, the Long Knives, we came in truth to conquer, and because of their hasty judgment the Kaskaskians were at our mercy. The British had told them that the Kentuckians were a barbarous people, and they had believed.

He paused that John Duff might translate and the gist of what he had said sink in. But suddenly the priest had stepped out from the ranks, faced his people, and was himself translating in a strong voice. When he had finished a tremor shook the group. But he turned calmly and faced Clark once more.

"Citizens of Kaskaskia," Colonel Clark went on, "the king whom you renounced when the English conquered you, the great King of France, has judged for you and the French people. Knowing that the American cause is just, he is sending his fleets and regiments to fight for it against the British King, who until now has been your sovereign."

Again he paused, and when the priest had told them this, a murmur of astonishment came from the boldest.

"Citizens of Kaskaskia, know you that the Long Knives come not to massacre, as you foolishly believed, but to release from bondage. We are come not against you, who have been deceived, but against those soldiers of the British King who have bribed the savages to slaughter our wives and children. You have but to take the oath of allegiance to the Continental Congress to become free,

even as we are, to enjoy the blessings of that American government under which we live and for which we fight."

The face of the good priest kindled as he glanced at Clark. He turned once more, and though we could not understand his words, the thrill of his eloquence moved us. And when he had finished there was a moment's hush of inarticulate joy among his flock, and then such transports as moved strangely the sternest men in our ranks. The simple people fell to embracing each other and praising God, the tears running on their cheeks. Out of the group came an old man. A skullcap rested on his silvered hair, and he felt the ground uncertainly with his gold-headed stick.

"Monsieur," he said tremulously "you will pardon an old man if he show feeling. I am born seventy year ago in Gascon. I inhabit this country thirty year, and last night I think I not live any longer. Last night we make our peace with the good God, and come here to-day to die. But we know you not," he cried, with a sudden and surprising vigor; "ha, we know you not! They told us lies, and we were humble and believed. But now we are *Américains*," he cried, his voice pitched high, as he pointed with a trembling arm to the stars and stripes above him. "*Mes enfants, vive les Bostonnais! Vive les Américains! Vive Monsieur le Colonel Clark, sauveur de Kaskaskia!*"

The listening village heard the shout and wondered. And when it had died down Colonel Clark took the old Gascon by the hand, and not a man of his but saw that this was a master-stroke of his genius.

"My friends," he said simply, "I thank you. I would not force you, and you will have some days to think over the oath of allegiance to the Republic. Go now to your homes, and tell those who are awaiting you what I have said. And if any man of French birth wish to leave this place, he may go of his own free will, save only three whom I suspect are not our friends."

They turned, and in an ecstasy of joy quite pitiful to see went trooping out of the gate. But scarce could they have reached the street and we have broken ranks, when we

saw them coming back again, the priest leading them as before. They drew near to the spot where Clark stood, talking to the captains, and halted expectantly.

"What is it, my friends?" asked the Colonel.

The priest came forward and bowed gravely.

"I am Père Gibault, sir," he said, "curé of Kaskaskia." He paused, surveying our commander with a clear eye. "There is something that still troubles the good citizens."

"And what is that, sir?" said Clark.

The priest hesitated.

"If your Excellency will only allow the church to be opened—" he ventured.

The group stood wistful, fearful that their boldness had displeased, expectant of reprimand.

"My good Father," said Colonel Clark, "an American commander has but one relation to any church. And that is" (he added with force) "to protect it. For all religions are equal before the Republic."

The priest gazed at him intently.

"By that answer," said he, "your Excellency has made for your government loyal citizens in Kaskaskia."

Then the Colonel stepped up to the priest and took him likewise by the hand.

"I have arranged for a house in town," said he. "Monsieur Rocheblave has refused to dine with me there. Will you do me that honor, Father?"

"With all my heart, your Excellency," said Father Gibault. And turning to the people, he translated what the Colonel had said. Then their cup of happiness was indeed full, and some ran to Clark and would have thrown their arms about him had he been a man to embrace. Hurrying out of the gate, they spread the news like wildfire, and presently the church bell clanged in tones of unmistakable joy.

"Sure, Davy dear, it puts me in mind of the Saints' day at home," said Terence, as he stood leaning against a picket fence that bordered the street, "savin' the presence of the naygurs and thim red divils wid blankets an' scowls as wud turrn the milk sour in the pail."

He had stopped beside two Kaskaskia warriors in scarlet blankets who stood at the corner, watching with silent contempt the antics of the French inhabitants. Now and again one or the other gave a grunt and wrapped his blanket more tightly about him.

"Umrrhh!" said Terence. "Faith, I talk that langwidge mesilf when I have throuble." The warriors stared at him with what might be called a stoical surprise. "Umrrh! Does the holy father praych to ye wid thim wurrds, ye haythens? Begorra, 'tis a wondher ye wuddent wash yereselves," he added, making a face, "wid muddy wather to be had for the askin'."

We moved on, through such a scene as I have seldom beheld. The village had donned its best: women in cap and gown were hurrying hither and thither, some laughing and some weeping; grown men embraced each other; children of all colors flung themselves against Terence's legs, — dark-haired Creoles, little negroes with woolly pates, and naked Indian lads with bow and arrow. Terence dashed at them now and then, and they fled screaming into dooryards to come out again and mimic him when he had passed, while mothers and fathers and grandfathers smiled at the good nature in his Irish face. Presently he looked down at me comically.

"Why wuddent ye be doin' the like, Davy?" he asked. "Amusha! 'tis mesilf that wants to run and hop and skip wid the childher. Ye put me in mind of a wizened old man that sat all day makin' shoes in Killarney, — all savin' the fringe he had on his chin."

"A soldier must be dignified," I answered.

"The saints bar that wurrd from hiven," said Terence, trying to pronounce it. "Come, we'll go to mass, or me mother will be visitin' me this night."

We crossed the square and went into the darkened church, where the candles were burning. It was the first church I had ever entered, and I heard with awe the voice of the priest and the fervent responses, but I understood not a word of what was said. Afterwards Father Gibault mounted to the pulpit and stood for a moment with his

hand raised above his flock, and then began to speak. What he told them I have learned since. And this I know, that when they came out again into the sunlit square they were Americans. It matters not when they took the oath.

As we walked back towards the fort we came to a little house with a flower garden in front of it, and there stood Colonel Clark himself by the gate. He stopped us with a motion of his hand.

"Davy," said he, "we are to live here for a while, you and I. What do you think of our headquarters?" He did not wait for me to reply, but continued, "Can you suggest any improvement?"

"You will be needing a soldier to be on guard in front, sir," said I.

"Ah," said the Colonel, "McChesney is too valuable a man. I am sending him with Captain Bowman to take Cahokia."

"Would you have Terence, sir?" I ventured, while Terence grinned. Whereupon Colonel Clark sent him to report to his captain that he was detailed for orderly duty to the commanding officer. And within half an hour he was standing guard in the flower garden, making grimaces at the children in the street. Colonel Clark sat at a table in the little front room, and while two of Monsieur Rocheblave's negroes cooked his dinner, he was busy with a score of visitors, organizing, advising, planning, and commanding. There were disputes to settle now that alarm had subsided, and at noon three excitable gentlemen came in to inform against a certain Monsieur Cerre, merchant and trader, then absent at St. Louis. When at length the Colonel had succeeded in bringing their denunciations to an end and they had departed, he looked at me comically as I stood in the doorway.

"Davy," said he, "all I ask of the good Lord is that He will frighten me incontinently for a month before I die."

"I think He would find that difficult, sir," I answered.

"Then there's no hope for me," he answered, laughing, "for I have observed that fright alone brings a man into

a fit spiritual state to enter heaven. What would you say of those slanderers of Monsieur Cerre?"

Not expecting an answer, he dipped his quill into the ink-pot and turned to his papers.

"I should say that they owed Monsieur Cerre money," I replied.

The Colonel dropped his quill and stared. As for me, I was puzzled to know why.

"Egad," said Colonel Clark, "most of us get by hard knocks what you seem to have been born with." He fell to musing, a worried look coming on his face that was no stranger to me later, and his hand fell heavily on the loose pile of paper before him. "Davy," says he, "I need a commissary-general."

"What would that be, sir," I asked.

"A John Law, who will make something out of nothing, who will make money out of this blank paper, who will wheedle the Creole traders into believing they are doing us a favor and making their everlasting fortune by advancing us flour and bacon."

"And doesn't Congress make money, sir?" I asked.

"That they do, Davy, by the ton," he replied, "and so must we, as the rulers of a great province. For mark me, though the men are happy to-day, in four days they will be grumbling and trying to desert in dozens."

We were interrupted by a knock at the door, and there stood Terence McCann.

"His riverence!" he announced, and bowed low as the priest came into the room.

I was bid by Colonel Clark to sit down and dine with them on the good things which Monsieur Rocheblave's cook had prepared. After dinner they went into the little orchard behind the house and sat drinking (in the French fashion) the commandant's precious coffee which had been sent to him from far-away New Orleans. Colonel Clark plied the priest with questions of the French towns under English rule: and Father Gibault, speaking for his simple people, said that the English had led them easily to believe that the Kentuckians were cutthroats.

"Ah, monsieur," he said, "if they but knew you! If they but knew the principles of that government for which you fight, they would renounce the English allegiance, and the whole of this territory would be yours. I know them, from Quebec to Detroit and Michilimackinac and Saint Vincennes. Listen, monsieur," he cried, his homely face alight; "I myself will go to Saint Vincennes for you. I will tell them the truth, and you shall have the post for the asking."

"You will go to Vincennes!" exclaimed Clark; "a hard and dangerous journey of a hundred leagues!"

"Monsieur," answered the priest, simply, "the journey is nothing. For a century the missionaries of the Church have walked this wilderness alone with God. Often they have suffered, and often died in tortures — but gladly."

Colonel Clark regarded the man intently.

"The cause of liberty, both religious and civil, is our cause," Father Gibault continued. "Men have died for it, and will die for it, and it will prosper. Furthermore, Monsieur, my life has not known many wants. I have saved something to keep my old age, with which to buy a little house and an orchard in this peaceful place. The sum I have is at your service. The good Congress will repay me. And you need the money."

Colonel Clark was not an impulsive man, but he felt none the less deeply, as I know well. His reply to this generous offer was almost brusque, but it did not deceive the priest.

"Nay, monsieur," he said, "it is for mankind I give it, in remembrance of Him who gave everything. And though I receive nothing in return, I shall have my reward an hundred fold."

In due time, I know not how, the talk swung round again to lightness, for the Colonel loved a good story, and the priest had many which he told with wit in his quaint French accent. As he was rising to take his leave, Père Gibault put his hand on my head.

"I saw your Excellency's son in the church this morning," he said.

Colonel Clark laughed and gave me a pinch.

"My dear sir," he said, "the boy is old enough to be my father."

The priest looked down at me with a puzzled expression in his brown eyes.

"I would I had him for my son," said Colonel Clark, kindly; "but the lad is eleven, and I shall not be twenty-six until next November."

"Your Excellency not twenty-six!" cried Father Gibault, in astonishment. "What will you be when you are thirty?"

The young Colonel's face clouded.

"God knows!" he said.

Father Gibault dropped his eyes and turned to me with native tact.

"What would you like best to do, my son?" he asked.

"I should like to learn to speak French," said I, for I had been much irritated at not understanding what was said in the streets.

"And so you shall," said Father Gibault; "I myself will teach you. You must come to my house to-day."

"And Davy will teach me," said the Colonel.

CHAPTER XV

DAYS OF TRIAL

But I was not immediately to take up the study of French. Things began to happen in Kaskaskia. In the first place, Captain Bowman's company, with a few scouts, of which Tom was one, set out that very afternoon for the capture of Cohos, or Cahokia, and this despite the fact that they had had no sleep for two nights. If you will look at the map,[1] you will see, dotted along the bottoms and the bluffs beside the great Mississippi, the string of villages, Kaskaskia, La Prairie du Rocher, Fort Chartres, St. Philip, and Cahokia. Some few miles from Cahokia, on the western bank of the Father of Waters, was the little French village of St. Louis, in the Spanish territory of Louisiana. From thence eastward stretched the great waste of prairie and forest inhabited by roving bands of the forty Indian nations. Then you come to Vincennes on the Wabash, Fort St. Vincent, the English and Canadians called it, for there were a few of the latter who had settled in Kaskaskia since the English occupation.

We gathered on the western skirts of the village to give Bowman's company a cheer, and every man, woman, and child in the place watched the little column as it wound snakelike over the prairie on the road to Fort Chartres, until it was lost in the cottonwoods to the westward.

Things began to happen in Kaskaskia. It would have been strange indeed if things had not happened. One

[1] The best map which the editor has found of this district is in Vol. VI, Part 11, of Winsor's "Narrative and Critical History of America," p. 721.

hundred and seventy-five men had marched into that territory out of which now are carved the great states of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and to most of them the thing was a picnic, a jaunt which would soon be finished. Many had left families in the frontier forts without protection. The time of their enlistment had almost expired.

There was a store in the village kept by a great citizen, — not a citizen of Kaskaskia alone, but a citizen of the world. This, I am aware, sounds like fiction, like an attempt to get an effect which was not there. But it is true as gospel. The owner of this store had many others scattered about in this foreign country: at Vincennes, at St. Louis, where he resided, at Cahokia. He knew Michilimackinac and Quebec and New Orleans. He had been born some thirty-one years before in Sardinia, had served in the Spanish army, and was still a Spanish subject. The name of this famous gentleman was Monsieur François Vigo, and he was the Rothschild of the country north of the Ohio. Monsieur Vigo, though he merited it, I had not room to mention in the last chapter. Clark had routed him from his bed on the morning of our arrival, and whether or not he had been in the secret of frightening the inhabitants into making their wills, and then throwing them into transports of joy, I know not.

Monsieur Vigo's store was the village club. It had neither glass in the window nor an attractive display of goods; it was merely a log cabin set down on a weedy, sun-baked plot. The stuffy smell of skins and furs came out of the doorway. Within, when he was in Kaskaskia, Monsieur Vigo was wont to sit behind his rough walnut table, writing with a fine quill, or dispensing the news of the villages to the priest and other prominent citizens, or haggling with persistent blanketed braves over canoe-loads of ill-smelling pelts which they brought down from the green forests of the north. Monsieur Vigo's clothes were the color of the tobacco he gave in exchange; his eyes were not unlike the black beads he traded, but shrewd and kindly withal, set in a square saffron face that had the contradiction of a small chin. As the days

wore into months, Monsieur Vigo's place very naturally became the headquarters for our army, if army it might be called. Of a morning a dozen would be sitting against the logs in the black shadow, and in the midst of them always squatted an unsavory Indian squaw. A few braves usually stood like statues at the corner, and in front of the door another group of hunting shirts. Without was the paper money of the Continental Congress, within the good *tafia* and tobacco of Monsieur Vigo. One day Monsieur Vigo's young Creole clerk stood shrugging his shoulders in the doorway. I stopped.

"By tam!" Swein Poulsson was crying to the clerk, as he waved a worthless scrip above his head. "Vat is money?"

This definition the clerk, not being a Doctor Johnson, was unable to give offhand.

"Vat are you, choost? Is it America?" demanded Poulsson, while the others looked on, some laughing, some serious. "And vich citizen are you since you are ours? You vill please to give me one carrot of tobacco." And he thrust the scrip under the clerk's nose.

The clerk stared at the uneven lettering on the scrip with disdain.

"Money," he exclaimed scornfully, "she is not money. *Piastre* — Spanish dollare — then I give you carrot."

"By God!" shouted Bill Cowan, "ye will take Virginny paper, and Congress paper, or else I reckon we'll have a drink and tobaccy, boys, take or no take."

"Hooray, Bill, ye're right," cried several of our men.

"Lemme in here," said Cowan. But the frightened Creole blocked the doorway.

"*Sacré!*" he screamed, and then, "*Voleurs!*"

The excitement drew a number of people from the neighborhood. Nay, it seemed as if the whole town was ringed about us.

"*Bravo, Jules!*" they cried, "*garde-tu la porte. À bas les Bostonnais! À bas les voleurs!*"

"Damn such monkey talk," said Cowan, facing them suddenly. I knew him well, and when the giant lost his

temper it was gone irrevocably until a fight was over. "Call a man a squar' name."

"Hey, Frenchy," another of our men put in, stalking up to the clerk, "I reckon this here store's ourn, ef we've a mind to tek it. I 'low you'll give us the rum and the 'baccy. Come on, boys!"

In between him and the clerk leaped a little, robin-like man with a red waistcoat, beside himself with rage. Bill Cowan and his friends stared at this diminutive Frenchman, open-mouthed, as he poured forth a veritable torrent of unintelligible words, plentifully mixed with *sacrés*, which he ripped out like snarls. I would as soon have touched him as a ball of angry bees or a pair of fighting wildcats. Not so Bill Cowan. When that worthy recovered from his first surprise he seized hold of some of the man's twisting arms and legs and lifted him bodily from the ground, as he would have taken a perverse and struggling child. There was no question of a fight. Cowan picked him up, I say, and before any one knew what happened, he flung him on to the hot roof of the store (the eaves were but two feet above his head), and there the man stuck, clinging to a loose shingle, purpling and coughing and spitting with rage. There was a loud gust of guffaws from the woodsmen, and oaths like whip-cracks from the circle around us, menacing growls as it surged inward and our men turned to face it. A few citizens pushed through the outskirts of it and ran away, and in the hush that followed we heard them calling wildly the names of Father Gibault and Clark and of Vigo himself. Cowan thrust me past the clerk into the store, where I stood listening to the little man on the roof, scratching and clutching at the shingles, and coughing still.

But there was no fight. Shouts of "*Monsieur Vigo! Voici Monsieur Vigo!*" were heard, the crowd parted respectfully, and Monsieur Vigo in his snuff-colored suit stood glancing from Cowan to his pallid clerk. He was not in the least excited.

"Come in, my frens," he said; "it is too hot in the

sun." And he set the example by stepping over the sill on to the hard-baked earth of the floor within. Then he spied me. "Ah," he said, "the boy of Monsieur le Colonel! And how are you called, my son?" he added, patting me kindly.

"Davy, sir," I answered.

"Ha," he said, "and a brave soldier, no doubt."

I was flattered as well as astonished by this attention. But Monsieur Vigo knew men, and he had given them time to turn around. By this time Bill Cowan and some of my friends had stooped through the doorway, followed by a prying Kaskaskian brave and as many Creoles as could crowd behind them. Monsieur Vigo was surprisingly calm.

"It make hot weather, my frien's," said he. "How can I serve you, messieurs?"

"Hain't the Congress got authority here?" said one.

"I am happy to say," answered Monsieur Vigo, rubbing his hands, "for I think much of your principle."

"Then," said the man, "we come here to trade with Congress money. Hain't that money good in Kaskasky?"

There was an anxious pause. Then Monsieur Vigo's eyes twinkled, and he looked at me.

"And what you say, Davy?" he asked.

"The money would be good if you took it, sir," I said, not knowing what else to answer.

"*Sapristi!*" exclaimed Monsieur Vigo, looking hard at me. "Who teach you that?"

"No one, sir," said I, staring in my turn.

"And if Congress lose, and not pay, where am I, *mon petit maître de la haute finance?*" demanded Monsieur Vigo, with the palms of his hands outward.

"You will be in good company, sir," said I.

At that he threw back his head and laughed, and Bill Cowan and my friends laughed with him.

"Good company — *c'est la plupart de la vie*," said Monsieur Vigo. "*Et quel garçon* — what a boy it is!"

"I never seed his beat fer wisdom, Mister Vigo," said Bill Cowan, now in good humor once more at the prospect

of rum and tobacco. And I found out later that he and the others had actually given to me the credit of this coup. "He never failed us yet. Hain't that truth, boys? Hain't we a-goin' on to St. Vincent because he seen the Ha'r Buyer sculped on the Ohio?"

The rest assented so heartily but withal so gravely, that I am between laughter and tears over the remembrance of it.

"At noon you come back," said Monsieur Vigo. "I think till then about rate of exchange, and talk with your Colonel. Davy, you stay here."

I remained, while the others filed out, and at length I was alone with him and Jules, his clerk.

"Davy, how you like to be trader?" asked Monsieur Vigo.

It was a new thought to me, and I turned it over in my mind. To see the strange places of the world, and the stranger people; to become a man of wealth and influence, such as Monsieur Vigo; and (I fear I loved it best) to match my brains with others at a bargain, — I turned it all over slowly, gravely, in my boyish mind, rubbing the hard dirt on the floor with the toe of my moccasin. And suddenly the thought came to me that I was a traitor to my friends, a deserter from the little army that loved me so well.

"*Eh bien?*" said Monsieur Vigo.

I shook my head, but in spite of me I felt the tears welling into my eyes and brushed them away shamefully. At such times of stress some of my paternal Scotch crept into my speech.

"I will no be leaving Colonel Clark and the boys," I cried, "not for all the money in the world."

"Congress money?" said Monsieur Vigo, with a queer expression.

It was then I laughed through my tears, and that cemented the friendship between us. It was a lifelong friendship, though I little suspected it then.

In the days that followed he never met me on the street that he did not stop to pass the time of day, and ask me

if I had changed my mind. He came every morning to headquarters, where he and Colonel Clark sat by the hour with brows knit. Monsieur Vigo was as good as his word, and took the Congress money, though not at such a value as many would have had him. I have often thought that we were all children then, and knew nothing of the ingratitude of republics. Monsieur Vigo took the money, and was all his life many, many thousand dollars the poorer. Father Gibault advanced his little store, and lived to feel the pangs of want. And Colonel Clark? But I must not go beyond the troubles of that summer, and the problems that vexed our commander. One night I missed him from the room where we slept, and walking into the orchard found him pacing there, where the moon cast filmy shadows on the grass. By day as he went around among the men his brow was unclouded, though his face was stern. But now I surprised the man so strangely moved that I yearned to comfort him. He had taken three turns before he perceived me.

"Davy," he said, "what are you doing here?"

"I missed you, sir," I answered, staring at the furrows in his face.

"Come!" he said almost roughly, and seizing my hand, led me back and forth swiftly through the wet grass for I know not how long. The moon dipped to the uneven line of the ridge-pole and slipped behind the stone chimney. All at once he stopped, dropped my hand, and smote both of his together.

"I *will* hold on, by the eternal!" he cried. "I will let no American read his history and say that I abandoned this land. Let them desert! If ten men be found who will stay, I will hold the place for the Republic."

"Will not Virginia and the Congress send you men, sir?" I asked wonderingly.

He laughed a laugh that was all bitterness.

"Virginia and the Continental Congress know little and care less about me," he answered. "Some day you will learn that foresight sometimes comes to men, but never to assemblies. But it is often given to one man to

work out the salvation of a people, and be destroyed for it. Davy, we have been up too long."

At the morning parade, from my wonted place at the end of the line, I watched him with astonishment, reviewing the troops as usual. For the very first day I had crossed the river with Terence, climbed the heights to the old fort, and returned with my drum. But no sooner had I beaten the retreat than the men gathered here and there in groups that smouldered with mutiny, and I noted that some of the officers were amongst these. Once in a while a sentence like a flaming brand was flung out. Their time was up, their wives and children for all they knew sculped by the red varmints, and, by the etarnal, Clark or no man living could keep them.

"Hi," said one, as I passed, "here's Davy with his drum. He'll be leadin' us back to Kaintuck in the morning."

"Ay, ay," cried another man in the group, "I reckon he's had his full of tyranny, too."

I stopped, my face blazing red.

"Shame on you for those words!" I shouted shrilly. "Shame on you, you fools, to desert the man who would save your wives and children. How are the redskins to be beaten if they are not cowed in their own country?" For I had learned much at headquarters.

They stood silent, astonished, no doubt, at the sight of my small figure a-tremble with anger. I heard Bill Cowan's voice behind me.

"There's truth for ye," he said, "that will slink home when a thing's half done."

"Ye needn't talk, Bill Cowan; it's well enough for ye. I reckon your wife'd scare any redskin off her clearin'."

"Many the time she scart me," said Bill Cowan.

And so the matter went by with a laugh. But the grumbling continued, and the danger was that the French would learn of it. The day passed, yet the embers blazed not into the flame of open mutiny. But he who has seen service knows how ominous is the gathering of men here and there, the low humming talk, the silence when a

dissenter passes. There were fights, too, that had to be quelled by company captains, and no man knew when the loud quarrel between the two races at Vigo's store would grow into an ugly battle.

What did Clark intend to do? This was the question that hung in the minds of mutineer and faithful alike. They knew the desperation of his case. Without money, save that which the generous Creoles had advanced upon his personal credit; without apparent resources; without authority, save that which the weight of his character exerted,—how could he prevent desertion? They eyed him as he went from place to place about his business,—erect, thoughtful, undisturbed. Few men dare to set their will against a multitude when there are no fruits to be won. Columbus persisted, and found a new world; Clark persisted, and won an empire for thoughtless generations to enjoy.

That night he slept not at all, but sat, while the candles flickered in their sockets, poring over maps and papers. I dared not disturb him, but lay the darkness through with staring eyes. And when the windows on the orchard side showed a gray square of light, he flung down the parchment he was reading on the table. It rolled up of itself, and he pushed back his chair. I heard him call my name, and leaping out of bed, I stood before him.

"You sleep lightly, Davy," he said, I think to try me.

I did not answer, fearing to tell him that I had been awake watching him.

"I have one friend, at least," said the Colonel.

"You have many, sir," I answered, "as you will find when the time comes."

"The time has come," said he; "to-day I shall be able to count them. Davy, I want you to do something for me."

"Now, sir?" I answered, overjoyed.

"As soon as the sun strikes that orchard," he said, pointing out of the window. "You have learned how to keep things to yourself. Now I want you to impart them to others. Go out, and tell the village that I am going away."

"That you are going away, sir?" I repeated.

"That I am going away," he said, "with my army, (save the mark!), with my army and my drummer boy and my paper money. Such is my faith in the loyalty of the good people of these villages to the American cause, that I can safely leave the flag flying over their heads with the assurance that they will protect it."

I stared at him doubtfully, for at times a pleasantry came out of his bitterness.

"Ay," he said, "go! Have you any love for me?"

"I have, sir," I answered.

"By the Lord, I believe you," he said, and picking up my small hunting shirt, he flung it at me. "Put it on, and go when the sun rises."

As the first shaft of light over the bluff revealed the diamonds in the orchard grass I went out, wondering. *Suspecting* would be a better word for the nature I had inherited. But I had my orders. Terence was pacing the garden, his leggings turned black with the dew. I looked at him. Here was a vessel to disseminate.

"Terence, the Colonel is going back to Virginia with the army."

"Him!" cried Terence, dropping the stock of his Deckard to the ground. "And back to Kaintuckee! Arrah, 'tis a sin to be jokin' before a man has a bit in his sthummick. Bad cess to yere plisantry before breakfast."

"I'm telling you what the Colonel himself told me," I answered, and ran on. "Davy, darlin'!" I heard him calling after me as I turned the corner, but I looked not back.

There was a single sound in the street. A thin, bronzed Indian lad squatted against the pickets with his fingers on a reed, his cheeks distended. He broke off with a wild, mournful note to stare at me. A wisp of smoke stole from a stone chimney, and the smell that corn-pone and bacon leave was in the air. A bolt was slammed back, a door creaked and stuck, was flung open, and with a "*Va t'en, méchant!*" a cotton-clad urchin was cast out of the house, and fled into the dusty street.

Breathing the morning air in the doorway, stood a young woman in a cotton gown, a saucepan in hand. She had inquisitive eyes, a pointed, prying nose, and I knew her to be the village gossip, the wife of Jules, Monsieur Vigo's clerk. She had the same smattering of English as her husband. Now she stood regarding me narrowly between half-closed lids.

"*A la bonne heure! Que fais-tu donc?* What do you do so early?"

"The garrison is getting ready to leave for Kentucky to-day," I answered.

"*Ha! Jules! Écoute-toi! Nom de dieu!* Is it true what you say?"

The visage of Jules, surmounted by a nightcap and heavy with sleep, appeared behind her.

"*Ha, c'est Daveed!*" he said. "What news have you?"

I repeated, whereupon they both began to lament.

"And why is it?" persisted Jules.

"He has such faith in the loyalty of the Kaskaskians," I answered, parrot-like.

"*Diable!*" cried Jules, "we shall perish. We shall be as the Acadians. And loyalty—she will not save us, no."

Other doors creaked. Other inhabitants came in varied costumes into the street to hear the news, lamenting. If Clark left, the day of judgment was at hand for them, that was certain. Between the savage and the Briton not one stone would be left standing on another. Madame Jules forgot her breakfast, and fled up the street with the tidings. And then I made my way to the fort, where the men were gathering about the camp-fires, talking excitedly. Terence, relieved from duty, had done the work here.

"And he as little as a fox, wid all that in him," he cried, when he perceived me walking demurely past the sentry. "Davy, dear, come here an' tell the b'ys am I a liar."

"Davy's monstrous cute," said Bill Cowan; "I reckon he knows as well as me the Colonel hain't a-goin' to do no such tomfool thing as leave."

"He is," I cried, for the benefit of some others, "he's

fair sick of grumblers that haven't got the grit to stand by him in trouble."

"By the Lord!" said Bill Cowan, "and I'll not blame him." He turned fiercely, his face reddening. "Shame on ye all yere lives," he shouted. "Ye're making the best man that ever led a regiment take the back trail. Ye'll fetch back to Kaintuck, and draw every redskin in the north woods suckin' after ye like leaves in a harricane wind. There hain't a man of ye has the pluck of this little shaver that beats the drum. I wish to God McChesney was here."

He turned away to cross the parade ground, followed by the faithful Terence and myself. Others gathered about him: McAndrew, who, for all his sourness, was true; Swein Poulsson, who would have died for the Colonel; John Duff, and some twenty more, including Saunders, whose affection had not been killed, though Clark had nearly hanged him among the prairies.

"Begob!" said Terence, "Davy has inflooence wid his Excellency. It's Davy we'll sind, prayin' him not to lave the Frinch alone wid their loyalty."

It was agreed, and I was to repeat the name of every man that sent me.

Departing on this embassy, I sped out of the gates of the fort. But, as I approached the little house where Clark lived, the humming of a crowd came to my ears, and I saw with astonishment that the street was blocked. It appeared that the whole of the inhabitants of Kaskaskia were packed in front of the place. Wriggling my way through the people, I had barely reached the gate when I saw Monsieur Vigo and the priest, three Creole gentlemen in uniform, and several others coming out of the door. They stopped, and Monsieur Vigo, raising his hand for silence, made a speech in French to the people. What he said I could not understand, and when he had finished they broke up into groups, and many of them departed. Before I could gain the house, Colonel Clark himself came out with Captain Helm and Captain Harrod. The Colonel glanced at me and smiled.

"Parade, Davy," he said, and walked on.

I ran back to the fort, and when I had gotten my drum the three companies were falling into line, the men murmuring in undertones among themselves. They were brought to attention. Colonel Clark was seen to come out of the commandant's house, and we watched him furtively as he walked slowly to his place in front of the line. A tremor of excitement went from sergeant to drummer boy. The sentries closed the big gates of the fort.

The Colonel stood for a full minute surveying us calmly, — a disquieting way he had when matters were at a crisis. Then he began to talk.

"I have heard from many sources that you are dissatisfied, that you wish to go back to Kentucky. If that be so, I say to you, 'Go, and God be with you.' I will hinder no man. We have taken a brave and generous people into the fold of the Republic, and they have shown their patriotism by giving us freely of their money and stores." He raised his voice. "They have given the last proof of that patriotism this day. Yes, they have come to me and offered to take your places, to finish the campaign which you have so well begun and wish to abandon. To-day I shall enroll their militia under the flag for which you have fought."

When he had ceased speaking a murmur ran through the ranks.

"But if there be any," he said, "who have faith in me and in the cause for which we have come here, who have the perseverance and the courage to remain, I will reënlist them. The rest of you shall march for Kentucky," he cried, "as soon as Captain Bowman's company can be relieved at Cahokia. The regiment is dismissed."

For a moment they remained in ranks, as though stupefied. It was Cowan who stepped out first, snatched his coonskin hat from his head, and waved it in the air.

"Huzzay for Colonel Clark!" he roared. "I'll foller him into Canady, and stand up to my lick log."

They surrounded Bill Cowan, not the twenty which

had flocked to him in the morning, but four times twenty, and they marched in a body to the commandant's house to be reënlisted. The Colonel stood by the door, and there came a light in his eyes as he regarded us. They cheered him again.

"Thank you, lads," he said; "remember, we may have to whistle for our pay."

"Damn the pay!" cried Bill Cowan, and we echoed the sentiment.

"We'll see what can be done about land grants," said the Colonel, and he turned away.

At dusk that evening I sat on the back door-step, by the orchard, cleaning his rifle. The sound of steps came from the little passage behind me, and a hand was on my head.

"Davee," said a voice (it was Monsieur Vigo's), "do you know what is *un coup d'état?*"

"No, sir."

"Ha! You execute one to-day. Is it not so, Monsieur le Colonel?"

"I reckon he was in the secret," said Colonel Clark. "Did you think I meant to leave Kaskaskia, Davy?"

"No, sir."

"He is not so easy fool," Monsieur Vigo put in. "He tell me paper money good if I take it. *C'est la haute finance!*"

Colonel Clark laughed.

"And why didn't you think I meant to leave?" said he.

"Because you bade me go out and tell everybody," I answered. "What you really mean to do you tell no one."

"*Nom du bon Dieu!*" exclaimed Monsieur Vigo.

Yesterday Colonel Clark had stood alone, the enterprise for which he had risked all on the verge of failure. By a master-stroke his ranks were repleted, his position recovered, his authority secured once more.

Few men recognize genius when they see it. Monsieur Vigo was not one of these.

CHAPTER XVI

DAVY GOES TO CAHOKIA

I SHOULD make but a poor historian, for I have not stuck to my chronology. But as I write, the vivid recollections are those that I set down. I have forgotten two things of great importance. First, the departure of Father Gibault with several Creole gentlemen and a spy of Colonel Clark's for Vincennes, and their triumphant return in August. The sacrifice of the good priest had not been in vain, and he came back with the joyous news of a peaceful conquest. The stars and stripes now waved over the fort, and the French themselves had put it there. And the vast stretch of country from that place westward to the Father of Waters was now American.

And that brings me to the second oversight. The surprise and conquest of Cahokia by Bowman and his men was like that of Kaskaskia. And the French there were loyal, too, offering their militia for service in the place of those men of Bowman's company who would not reënlist. These came to Kaskaskia to join our home-goers, and no sooner had the hundred marched out of the gate and taken up their way for Kentucky than Colonel Clark began the drilling of the new troops.

Captain Leonard Helm was sent to take charge of Vincennes, and Captain Montgomery set out across the mountains for Williamsburg with letters praying the governor of Virginia to come to our assistance.

For another cloud had risen in the horizon : another problem for Clark to face of greater portent than all the others. A messenger from Captain Bowman at Cohos came riding down the street on a scraggly French pony, and pulled up before headquarters. The messenger was

Sergeant Thomas McChesney, and his long legs almost reached the ground on either side of the little beast. Leaping from the saddle, he seized me in his arms, set me down, and bade me tell Colonel Clark of his arrival.

It was a sultry August morning. Within the hour Colonel Clark and Tom and myself were riding over the dusty trace that wound westward across the common lands of the village, which was known as the Fort Chartres road. The heat-haze shimmered in the distance, and there was no sound in plain or village save the tinkle of a cowbell from the clumps of shade. Colonel Clark rode twenty paces in front, alone, his head bowed with thinking.

"They're coming into Cahokia as thick as bees out'n a gum, Davy," said Tom; "seems like there's thousands of 'em. Nothin' will do 'em but they must see the Colonel, — the varmints. And they've got patience, they'll wait thar till the b'ars git fat. I reckon they 'low Clark's got the armies of Congress behind him. If they knowed," said Tom, with a chuckle, "if they knowed that we'd only got seventy of the boys and some hundred Frenchies in the army! I reckon the Colonel's too cute for 'em."

The savages in Cahokia were as the leaves of the forest. Curiosity, that mainspring of the Indian character, had brought the chiefs, big and little, to see with their own eyes the great Captain of the Long Knives. In vain had the faithful Bowman put them off. They would wait. Clark must come. And Clark was coming, for he was not the man to quail at such a crisis. For the crux of the whole matter was here. And if he failed to impress them with his power, with the might of the Congress for which he fought, no man of his would ever see Kentucky again.

As we rode through the bottom under the pecan trees we talked of Polly Ann, Tom and I, and of our little home by the Salt River far to the southward, where we would live in peace when the campaign was over. Tom had written her, painfully enough, an affectionate scrawl, which he sent by one of Captain Linn's men. And I, too, had written. My letter had been about Tom, and how

he had become a sergeant, and what a favorite he was with Bowman and the Colonel. Poor Polly Ann! She could not write, but a runner from Harrodstown who was a friend of Tom's had carried all the way to Cahokia, in the pocket with his despatches, a fold of nettle-bark linen. Tom pulled it from the bosom of his hunting shirt to show me, and in it was a little ring of hair like unto the finest spun red-gold. This was the message Polly Ann had sent, — a message from little Tom as well.

At Prairie du Rocher, at St. Philippe, the inhabitants lined the streets to do homage to this man of strange power who rode, unattended and unafraid, to the council of the savage tribes which had terrorized his people of Kentucky. From the ramparts of Fort Chartres (once one of the mighty chain of strongholds to protect a new France, and now deserted like Massacre), I gazed for the first time in awe at the turgid flood of the Mississippi, and at the lands of the Spanish king beyond. With never ceasing fury the river tore at his clay banks and worried the green islands that braved his charge. And my boyish fancy pictured to itself the monsters which might lie hidden in his muddy depths.

We lay that night in the open at a spring on the bluffs, and the next morning beheld the church tower of Cahokia. A little way from the town we perceived an odd gathering on the road, the yellowed and weathered hunting shirts of Bowman's company mixed with the motley dress of the Creole volunteers. Some of these gentlemen wore the costume of *coureurs du bois*, others had odd regimental coats and hats which had seen much service. Besides the military was a sober deputation of citizens, and hovering behind the whole a horde of curious, blanketed braves, come to get a first glimpse of the great white captain. So escorted, we crossed at the mill, came to a shady street that faced the little river, and stopped at the stone house where Colonel Clark was to abide.

On that day, and for many days more, that street was thronged with warriors. Chiefs in gala dress strutted up and down, feathered and plumed and blanketed, smeared

with paint, bedecked with rude jewellery, — earrings and bracelets. From the remote forests of the north they had come, where the cold winds blow off the blue lakes; from the prairies to the east; from the upper running waters, where the Mississippi flows clear and undefiled by the muddy flood; from the villages and wigwams of the sluggish Wabash; and from the sandy, piny country between the great northern seas where Michilimackinac stands guard alone, — Sacs and Foxes, Chippeways and Maumies and Missesogies, Puans and Pottawattomies, chiefs and medicine men.

Well might the sleep of the good citizens be disturbed, and the women fear to venture to the creek with their linen and their paddles!

The lives of these people hung in truth upon a slender thing — the bearing of one man. All day long the great chiefs sought an audience with him, but he sent them word that matters would be settled in the council that was to come. All day long the warriors lined the picket fence in front of the house, and more than once Tom McChesney roughly shouldered a lane through them that timid visitors might pass. Like a pack of wolves, they watched narrowly for any sign of weakness. As for Tom, they were to him as so many dogs.

"Ye varmints!" he cried, "I'll take a blizz'rd at ye if ye don't keep the way clear."

At that they would give back grudgingly with a chorus of grunts, only to close in again as tightly as before. But they came to have a wholesome regard for the sun-browned man with the red hair who guarded the Colonel's privacy. The boy who sat on the door-step, the son of the great Pale Face Chief (as they called me), was a never ending source of comment among them. Once Colonel Clark sent for me. The little front room of this house was not unlike the one we had occupied at Kaskaskia. It had bare walls, a plain table and chairs, and a crucifix in the corner. It served as dining room, parlor, bedroom, for there was a pallet too. Now the table was covered with parchments and papers, and beside Colonel Clark sat a grave gentle-

man of about his own age. As I came into the room Colonel Clark relaxed, turned toward this gentleman, and said: —

"Monsieur Gratiot, behold my commissary-general, my strategist, my financier." And Monsieur Gratiot smiled. He struck me as a man who never let himself go sufficiently to laugh.

"Ah," he said, "Vigo has told me how he settled the question of paper money. He might do something for the Congress in the East."

"Davy is a Scotchman, like John Law," said the Colonel, "and he is a master at perceiving a man's character and business."

"What would you call me, at a venture, Davy?" asked Monsieur Gratiot.

He spoke excellent English, with only a slight accent.

"A citizen of the world, like Monsieur Vigo," I answered at a hazard.

"*Pardieu!*" said Monsieur Gratiot, "you are not far away. Like Monsieur Vigo I keep a store here at Cahokia. Like Monsieur Vigo, I have travelled much in my day. Do you know where Switzerland is, Davy?"

I did not.

"It is a country set like a cluster of jewels in the heart of Europe," said Monsieur Gratiot, "and there are mountains there that rise among the clouds and are covered with perpetual snows. And when the sun sets on those snows they are rubies, and the skies above them sapphire."

"I was born amongst the mountains, sir," I answered, my pulse quickening at his description, "but they were not so high as those you speak of."

"Then," said Monsieur Gratiot, "you can understand a little my sorrow as a lad when I left it. From Switzerland I went to a foggy place called London, and thence I crossed the ocean to the solemn forests of the north of Canada, where I was many years, learning the characters of these gentlemen who are looking in upon us." And he waved his arm at the line of peering red faces by the pickets. Monsieur Gratiot smiled at Clark. "And

there's another point of resemblance between myself and Monsieur Vigo."

"Have you taken the paper money?" I demanded.

Monsieur Gratiot slapped his linen breeches. "That I have," and this time I thought he was going to laugh. But he did not, though his eyes sparkled. "And do you think that the good Congress will ever repay me, Davy?"

"No, sir," said I.

"*Peste!*" exclaimed Monsieur Gratiot, but he did not seem to be offended or shaken.

"Davy," said Colonel Clark, "we have had enough of predictions for the present. Fetch this letter to Captain Bowman at the garrison up the street." He handed me the letter. "Are you afraid of the Indians?"

"If I were, sir, I would not show it," I said, for he had encouraged me to talk freely to him.

"Avast!" cried the Colonel, as I was going out. "And why not?"

"If I show that I am not afraid of them, sir, they will think that you are the less so."

"There you are for strategy, Gratiot," said Colonel Clark, laughing. "Get out, you rascal."

Tom was more concerned when I appeared.

"Don't pester 'em, Davy," said he; "fer God's sake don't pester 'em. They're spoilin' fer a fight. Stand back thar, ye critters," he shouted, brandishing his rifle in their faces. "Ugh, I reckon it wouldn't take a horse or a dog to scent ye to-day. Rank b'ar's oil! Kite along, Davy."

Clutching the letter tightly, I slipped between the narrowed ranks, and gained the middle of the street, not without a quickened beat of my heart. Thence I sped, dodging this group and that, until I came to the long log house that was called the garrison. Here our men were stationed, where formerly a squad from an English regiment was quartered. I found Captain Bowman, delivered the letter, and started back again through the brown, dusty street, which lay in the shade of the great forest trees that still lined it, doubling now and again to avoid an idling

brave that looked bent upon mischief. For a single mischance might set the tide running to massacre.

I was nearing the gate again, the dust flying from my moccasined feet, the sight of the stalwart Tom giving me courage again. Suddenly, with the deftness of a panther, an Indian shot forward and lifted me high in his arms. To this day I recall my terror as I dangled in mid-air, staring into a hideous face. By intuition I kicked him in the stomach with all my might, and with a howl of surprise and rage his fingers gripped into my flesh. The next thing I remember was being in the dust, suffocated by that odor which he who has known it can never forget. A medley of discordant cries was in my ears. Then I was snatched up, bumped against heads and shoulders, and deposited somewhere. Now it was Tom's face that was close to mine, and the light of a fierce anger was in his blue eyes.

"Did they hurt ye, Davy?" he asked.

I shook my head. Before I could speak he was at the gate again, confronting the mob of savages that swayed against the fence, and the street was filled with running figures. A voice of command that I knew well came from behind me. It was Colonel Clark's.

"Stay where you are, McChesney!" he shouted, and Tom halted with his hand on the latch.

"With your permission, I will speak to them," said Monsieur Gratiot, who had come out also.

I looked up at him, and he was as calm as when he had joked with me a quarter of an hour since.

"Very well," said Clark, briefly.

Monsieur Gratiot surveyed them scornfully.

"Where is the Hungry Wolf, who speaks English?" he said.

There was a stir in the rear ranks, and a lean savage with abnormal cheek bones pushed forward.

"Hungry Wolf here," he said with a grunt.

"The Hungry Wolf knew the French trader at Michilimackinac," said Monsieur Gratiot. "He knows that the French trader's word is a true word. Let the Hungry

Wolf tell his companions that the Chief of the Long Knives is very angry."

The Hungry Wolf turned, and began to speak. His words, hoarse and resonant, seemed to come from the depths of his body. Presently he paused, and there came an answer from the fiend who had seized me. After that there were many grunts, and the Hungry Wolf turned again.

"The North Wind mean no harm," he answered. "He play with the son of the Great White Chief, and his belly is very sore where the Chief's son kicked him."

"The Chief of the Long Knives will consider the offence," said Monsieur Gratiot, and retired into the house with Colonel Clark. For a full five minutes the Indians waited, impassive. And then Monseiur Gratiot reappeared, alone.

"The Chief of the Long Knives is mercifully inclined to forgive," he said. "It was in play. But there must be no more play with the Chief's son. And the path to the Great Chief's presence must be kept clear."

Again the Hungry Wolf translated. The North Wind grunted and departed in silence, followed by many of his friends. And indeed for a while after that the others kept a passage clear to the gate.

As for the son of the Great White Chief, he sat for a long time that afternoon beside the truck patch of the house. And presently he slipped out by a byway into the street again, among the savages. His heart was bumping in his throat, but a boyish reasoning told him that he must show no fear. And that day he found what his Colonel had long since learned to be true — that in courage is the greater safety. The power of the Great White Chief was such that he allowed his son to go forth alone, and feared not for his life. Even so Clark himself walked among them, nor looked to right or left.

Two nights Colonel Clark sat through, calling now on this man and now on that, and conning the treaties which the English had made with the various tribes — ay, and French and Spanish treaties too — until he knew them all

by heart. There was no haste in what he did, no uneasiness in his manner. He listened to the advice of Monsieur Gratiot and other Creole gentlemen of weight, to the Spanish officers who came in their regimentals from St. Louis out of curiosity to see how this man would treat with the tribes. For he spoke of his intentions to none of them, and gained the more respect by it. Within the week the council began; and the scene of the great drama was a field near the village, the background of forest trees. Few plays on the world's stage have held such suspense, few battles such excitement for those who watched. Here was the spectacle of one strong man's brain pitted against the combined craft of the wilderness. In the midst of a stretch of waving grass was a table, and a young man of six-and-twenty sat there alone. Around him were ringed the gathered tribes, each chief in the order of his importance squatted in the inner circle, their blankets making patches of bright color against the green. Behind the tribes was the little group of hunting shirts, the men leaning on the barrels of their long rifles, indolent but watchful. Here and there a gay uniform of a Spanish or Creole officer, and behind these all the population of the village that dared to show itself.

The ceremonies began with the kindling of the council fire, — a rite handed down through unknown centuries of Indian usage. By it nations had been made and unmade, broad lands passed, even as they now might pass. The yellow of its crackling flames was shamed by the summer sun, and the black smoke of it was wafted by the south wind over the forest. Then for three days the chiefs spoke, and a man listened, unmoved. The sound of these orations, wild and fearful to my boyish ear, comes back to me now. Yet there was a cadence in it, a music of notes now falling, now rising to a passion and intensity that thrilled us.

Bad birds flying through the land (the British agents) had besought them to take up the bloody hatchet. They had sinned. They had listened to the lies which the bad birds had told of the Big Knives, they had taken their

presents. But now the Great Spirit in His wisdom had brought themselves and the Chief of the Big Knives together. Therefore (suiting the action to the word) they stamped on the bloody belt, and rent in pieces the emblems of the White King across the water. So said the interpreters, as the chiefs one after another tore the miniature British flags which had been given them into bits. On the evening of the third day the White Chief rose in his chair, gazing haughtily about him. There was a deep silence.

"Tell your chiefs," he said, "tell your chiefs that tomorrow I will give them an answer. And upon the manner in which they receive that answer depends the fate of your nations. Good night."

They rose and, thronging around him, sought to take his hand. But Clark turned from them.

"Peace is not yet come," he said sternly. "It is time to take the hand when the heart is given with it."

A feathered headsman of one of the tribes gave back with dignity and spoke.

"It is well said by the Great Chief of the Pale Faces," he answered; "these in truth are not the words of a man with a double tongue."

So they sought their quarters for the night, and suspense hung breathless over the village.

There were many callers at the stone house that evening, — Spanish officers, Creole gentlemen, an English Canadian trader or two. With my elbow on the sill of the open window I watched them awhile, listening with a boy's eagerness to what they had to say of the day's doings. They disputed amongst themselves in various degrees of English as to the manner of treating the red man, — now gesticulating, now threatening, now seizing a rolled parchment treaty from the table. Clark sat alone, a little apart, silent save a word now and then in a low tone to Monsieur Gratiot or Captain Bowman. Here was an odd assortment of the races which had overrun the new world. At intervals some disputant would pause in his talk to kill a mosquito or fight away a moth or a June-bug, but

presently the argument reached such a pitch that the mosquitoes fed undisturbed.

"You have done much, sir," said the Spanish commandant of St. Louis, "but the savage, he will never be content without present. He will never be won without present."

Clark was one of those men who are perforce listened to when they begin to speak.

"Captain de Leyba," said he, "I know not what may be the present policy of his Spanish Majesty with McGillivray and his Creeks in the south, but this I do believe," and he brought down his fist among the papers, "that the old French and Spanish treaties were right in principle. Here are copies of the English treaties that I have secured, and in them thousands of sovereigns have been thrown away. They are so much waste paper. Gentlemen, the Indians are children. If you give them presents, they believe you to be afraid of them. I will deal with them without presents; and if I had the gold of the Bank of England stored in the garrison there, they should not touch a piece of it."

But Captain de Leyba, incredulous, raised his eyebrows and shrugged.

"*Por Dios*," he cried, "whoever hear of one man and fifty militia subduing the northern tribes without a *piastre?*"

After a while the Colonel called me in, and sent me speeding across the little river with a note to a certain Mr. Brady, whose house was not far away. Like many another citizen of Cahokia, Mr. Brady was terror-ridden. A party of young Puan bucks had decreed it to be their pleasure to encamp in Mr. Brady's yard, to peer through the shutters into Mr. Brady's house, to enjoy themselves by annoying Mr. Brady's family and others as much as possible. During the Indian occupation of Cahokia this band had gained a well-deserved reputation for mischief; and chief among them was the North Wind himself, whom I had done the honor to kick in the stomach. To-night they had made a fire in this Mr. Brady's flower-

garden, over which they were cooking venison steaks. And, as I reached the door, the North Wind spied me, grinned, rubbed his stomach, made a false dash at me that frightened me out of my wits, and finally went through the pantomime of scalping me. I stood looking at him with my legs apart, for the son of the Great Chief must not run away. And I marked that the North Wind had two great ornamental daubs like shutter-fastenings painted on his cheeks. I sniffed preparation, too, on his followers, and I was sure they were getting ready for some new deviltry. I handed the note to Mr. Brady through the crack of the door that he vouchsafed to me, and when he had slammed and bolted me out, I ran into the street and stood for some time behind the trunk of a big hickory, watching the followers of the North Wind. Some were painting themselves, others cleaning their rifles and sharpening their scalping knives. All jabbered unceasingly. Now and again a silent brave passed, paused a moment to survey them gravely, grunted an answer to something they would fling at him, and went on. At length arrived three chiefs whom I knew to be high in the councils. The North Wind came out to them, and the four blanketed forms stood silhouetted between me and the fire for a quarter of an hour. By this time I was sure of a plot, and fled away to another tree for fear of detection. At length stalked through the street the Hungry Wolf, the interpreter. I knew this man to be friendly to Clark, and I acted on impulse. He gave a grunt of surprise when I halted before him. I made up my mind.

"The son of the Great Chief knows that the Puans have wickedness in their hearts to-night," I said; "the tongue of the Hungry Wolf does not lie."

The big Indian drew back with another grunt, and the distant firelight flashed on his eyes as on polished black flints.

"Umrrhh! Is the Pale Face Chief's son a prophet?"

"The anger of the Pale Face Chief and of his countrymen is as the hurricane," I said, scarce believing my own

ears. For a lad is imitative by nature, and I had not listened to the interpreters for three days without profit.

The Hungry Wolf grunted again, after which he was silent for a long time. Then he said : —

"Let the Chief of the Long Knives have guard to-night." And suddenly he was gone into the darkness.

I waded the creek and sped to Clark. He was alone now, the shutters of the room closed. And as I came in I could scarce believe that he was the same masterful man I had seen at the council that day, and at the conference an hour gone. He was once more the friend at whose feet I sat in private, who talked to me as a companion and a father.

"Where have you been, Davy?" he asked. And then, "What is it, my lad?"

I crept close to him and told him in a breathless undertone, and I knew that I was shaking the while. He listened gravely, and when I had finished laid a firm hand on my head.

"There," he said, "you are a brave lad, and a canny."

He thought a minute, his hand still resting on my head, and then rose and led me to the back door of the house. It was near midnight, and the sounds of the place were stilling, the crickets chirping in the grass.

"Run to Captain Bowman and tell him to send ten men to this door. But they must come man by man, to escape detection. Do you understand?" I nodded and was starting, but he still held me. "God bless you, Davy, you are a brave boy."

He closed the door softly and I sped away, my moccasins making no sound on the soft dirt. I reached the garrison, was challenged by Jack Terrill, the guard, and brought by him to Bowman's room. The Captain sat, undressed, at the edge of his bed. But he was a man of action, and strode into the long room where his company was sleeping and gave his orders without delay.

Half an hour later there was no light in the village. The Colonel's headquarters were dark, but in the kitchen a dozen tall men were waiting.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SACRIFICE

So far as the world knew, the Chief of the Long Knives slept peacefully in his house. And such was his sense of power that not even a sentry paced the street without. For by these things is the Indian mind impressed. In the tiny kitchen a dozen men and a boy tried to hush their breathing, and sweltered. For it was very hot, and the pent-up odor of past cookings was stifling to men used to the open. In a corner, hooded under a box, was a lighted lantern, and Tom McChesney stood ready to seize it at the first alarm. On such occasions the current of time runs sluggish. Thrice our muscles were startled into tenseness by the baying of a hound, and once a cock crew out of all season. For the night was cloudy and pitchy black, and the dawn as far away as eternity.

Suddenly I knew that every man in the room was on the alert, for the skilled frontiersman, when watchful, has a sixth sense. None of them might have told you what he had heard. The next sound was the faint creaking of Colonel Clark's door as it opened. Wrapping a blanket around the lantern, Tom led the way, and we massed ourselves behind the front door. Another breathing space, and then the war-cry of the Puans broke hideously on the night, and children woke, crying, from their sleep. In two bounds our little detachment was in the street, the fire spouting red from the Deckards, faint, shadowy forms fading along the line of trees. After that an uproar of awakening, cries here and there, a drum beating madly for the militia. The dozen flung themselves across the stream, I hot in their wake, through Mr. Brady's gate, which was open ; and there was a scene of sweet tranquillity

under the lantern's rays, — the North Wind and his friends wrapped in their blankets and sleeping the sleep of the just.

"Damn the sly varmints," cried Tom, and he turned over the North Wind with his foot, as a log.

With a grunt of fury the Indian shed his blanket and scrambled to his feet, and stood glaring at us through his paint. But suddenly he met the fixed sternness of Clark's gaze, and his own shifted. By this time his followers were up. The North Wind raised his hands to heaven in token of his innocence, and then spread his palms outward. Where was the proof?

"Look!" I cried, quivering with excitement; "look, their leggings and moccasins are wet!"

"There's no devil if they beant!" said Tom, and there was a murmur of approval from the other men.

"The boy is right," said the Colonel, and turned to Tom. "Sergeant, have the chiefs put in irons." He swung on his heel, and without more ado went back to his house to bed. The North Wind and two others were easily singled out as the leaders, and were st aightway escorted to the garrison house, their air of injured innocence availing them not a whit. The militia was dismissed, and the village was hushed once more.

But all night long the chiefs went to and fro, taking counsel among themselves. What would the Chief of the Pale Faces do?

The morning came with a cloudy, damp dawning. Within a decent time (for the Indian is decorous) blanketed deputations filled the archways under the trees and waited there as the minutes ran into hours. The Chief of the Long Knives surveyed the morning from his door-step, and his eyes rested on a solemn figure at the gate. It was the Hungry Wolf. Sorrow was in his voice, and he bore messages from the twenty great chiefs who stood beyond. They were come to express their abhorrence of the night's doings, of which they were as innocent as the deer of the forest.

"Let the Hungry Wolf tell the chiefs," said Colonel

Clark, briefly, "that the council is the place for talk." And he went back into the house again.

Then he bade me run to Captain Bowman with an order to bring the North Wind and his confederates to the council field in irons.

The day followed the promise of the dawn. The clouds hung low, and now and again great drops struck the faces of the people in the field. And like the heavens, the assembly itself was charged with we knew not what. Was it peace or war? As before, a white man sat with supreme indifference at a table, and in front of him three most unhappy chiefs squatted in the grass, the shame of their irons hidden under the blanket folds. Audacity is truly a part of the equipment of genius. To have rescued the North Wind and his friends would have been child's play; to have retired from the council with threats of war, as easy.

And yet they craved pardon.

One chief after another rose with dignity in the ring and came to the table to plead. An argument deserving mention was that the North Wind had desired to test the friendship of the French for the Big Knives, — set forth without a smile. To all pleaders Colonel Clark shook his head. He, being a warrior, cared little whether such people were friends or foes. He held them in the hollow of his hand. And at length they came no more.

The very clouds seemed to hang motionless when he rose to speak, and you who will may read in his memoir what he said. The Hungry Wolf caught the spirit of it, and was eloquent in his own tongue, and no word of it was lost. First he told them of the causes of war, of the thirteen council fires with the English, and in terms that the Indian mind might grasp, and how their old father, the French King, had joined the Big Knives in this righteous fight.

"Warriors," said he, "here is a bloody belt and a white one; take which you choose. But behave like men. Should it be the bloody path, you may leave this town in safety to join the English, and we shall then see which of

us can stain our shirts with the most blood. But, should it be the path of peace as brothers of the Big Knives and of their friends the French, and then you go to your homes and listen to the bad birds, you will then no longer deserve to be called men and warriors, — but creatures of two tongues, which ought to be destroyed. Let us then part this evening in the hope that the Great Spirit will bring us together again with the sun as brothers."

So the council broke up. White man and red went trooping into town, staring curiously at the guard which was leading the North Wind and his friends to another night of meditation. What their fate would be no man knew. Many thought the tomahawk.

That night the citizens of the little village of *Pain Court*, as St. Louis was called, might have seen the sky reddened in the eastward. It was the loom of many fires at Cahokia, and around them the chiefs of the forty tribes — all save the three in durance vile — were gathered in solemn talk. Would they take the bloody belt or the white one? No man cared so little as the Pale Face Chief. When their eyes were turned from the fitful blaze of the logs, the gala light of many candles greeted them. And above the sound of their own speeches rose the merrier note of the fiddle. The garrison windows shone like lanterns, and behind these Creole and backwoodsman swung the village ladies in the gay French dances. The man at whose bidding this merrymaking was held stood in a corner watching with folded arms, and none to look at him might know that he was playing for a stake.

The troubled fires of the Indians had died to embers long before the candles were snuffed in the garrison house and the music ceased.

The sun himself was pleased to hail that last morning of the great council, and beamed with torrid tolerance upon the ceremony of kindling the greatest of the fires. On this morning Colonel Clark did not sit alone, but was surrounded by men of weight, — by Monsieur Gratiot and other citizens, Captain Bowman and the Spanish officers. And when at length the brush crackled and the flames

caught the logs, three of the mightiest chiefs arose. The greatest, victor in fifty tribal wars, held in his hand the white belt of peace. The second bore a long-stemmed pipe with a huge bowl. And after him, with measured steps, a third came with a smoking censer, — the sacred fire with which to kindle the pipe. Halting before Clark, he first swung the censer to the heavens, then to the earth, then to all the spirits of the air, — calling these to witness that peace was come at last, — and finally to the Chief of the Long Knives and to the gentlemen of dignity about his person. Next the Indian turned, and spoke to his brethren in measured, sonorous tones. He bade them thank that Great Spirit who had cleared the sky and opened their ears and hearts that they might receive the truth, — who had laid bare to their understanding the lies of the English. Even as these English had served the Big Knives, so might they one day serve the Indians. Therefore he commanded them to cast the tomahawk into the river, and when they should return to their land to drive the evil birds from it. And they must send their wise men to Kaskaskia to hear the words of wisdom of the Great White Chief, Clark. He thanked the Great Spirit for this council fire which He had kindled at Cahokia.

Lifting the bowl of the censer, in the eyes of all the people he drew in a long whiff to bear witness of peace. After him the pipe went the interminable rounds of the chiefs. Colonel Clark took it, and puffed; Captain Bowman puffed, — everybody puffed.

"Davy must have a pull," cried Tom; and even the chiefs smiled as I coughed and sputtered, while my friends roared with laughter. It gave me no great notion of the fragrance of tobacco. And then came such a hand-shaking and grunting as a man rarely sees in a lifetime.

There was but one disquieting question left: What was to become of the North Wind and his friends? None dared mention the matter at such a time. But at length, as the day wore on to afternoon, the Colonel was seen to speak quietly to Captain Bowman, and several backwoodsmen went off toward the town. And presently a silence

fell on the company as they beheld the dejected three crossing the field with a guard. They were led before Clark, and when he saw them his face hardened to sternness.

"It is only women who watch to catch a bear sleeping," he said. "The Big Knives do not kill women. I shall give you meat for your journey home, for women cannot hunt. If you remain here, you shall be treated as squaws. Set the women free."

Tom McChesney cast off their irons. As for Clark, he began to talk immediately with Monsieur Gratiot, as though he had dismissed them from his mind. And their agitation was a pitiful thing to see. In vain they pressed about him, in vain they even pulled the fringe of his shirt to gain his attention. And then they went about among the other chiefs, but these dared not intercede. Uneasiness was written on every man's face, and the talk went haltingly. But Clark was serenity itself. At length with a supreme effort they plucked up courage to come again to the table, one holding out the belt of peace, and the other the still smouldering pipe.

Clark paused in his talk. He took the belt, and flung it away over the heads of those around him. He seized the pipe, and taking up his sword from the table drew it, and with one blow clave the stem in half. There was no anger in either act, but much deliberation.

"The Big Knives," he said scornfully, "do not treat with women."

The pleading began again, the Hungry Wolf interpreting with tremors of earnestness. Their lives were spared, but to what purpose, since the White Chief looked with disfavor upon them? Let him know that bad men from Michilimackinac put the deed into their hearts.

"When the Big Knives come upon such people in the wilderness," Clark answered, "they shoot them down that they may not eat the deer. But they have never talked of it."

He turned from them once more; they went away in a dejection to wring our compassion, and we thought the matter ended at last. The sun was falling low, the people

beginning to move away, when, to the astonishment of all, the culprits were seen coming back again. With them were two young men of their own nation. The Indians opened up a path for them to pass through, and they came as men go to the grave. So mournful, so impressive withal, that the crowd fell into silence again, and the Colonel turned his eyes. The two young men sank down on the ground before him and shrouded their heads in their blankets.

"What is this?" Clark demanded.

The North Wind spoke in a voice of sorrow: —

"An atonement to the Great White Chief for the sins of our nation. Perchance the Great Chief will deign to strike a tomahawk into their heads, that our nation may be saved in war by the Big Knives." And the North Wind held forth the pipe once more.

"I have nothing to say to you," said Clark.

Still they stood irresolute, their minds now bereft of expedients. And the young men sat motionless on the ground. As Clark talked they peered out from under their blankets, once, twice, thrice. He was still talking to the wondering Monsieur Gratiot. But no other voice was heard, and the eyes of all were turned on him in amazement. But at last, when the drama had risen to the pitch of unbearable suspense, he looked down upon the two miserable pyramids at his feet, and touched them. The blankets quivered.

"Stand up," said the Colonel, "and uncover."

They rose, cast the blankets from them, and stood with a stoic dignity awaiting his pleasure. Wonderful, fine-limbed men they were, and for the first time Clark's eyes were seen to kindle.

"I thank the Great Spirit," said he, in a loud voice, "that I have found men among your nation. That I have at last discovered the real chiefs of your people. Had they sent such as you to treat with me in the beginning all might have been well. Go back to your people as their chiefs, and tell them that through you the Big Knives have granted peace to your nation."

Stepping forward, he grasped them each by the hand, and, despite training, joy shone in their faces, while a long-drawn murmur arose from the assemblage. But Clark did not stop there. He presented them to Captain Bowman and to the French and Spanish gentlemen present, and they were hailed by their own kind as chiefs of their nation. To cap it all our troops, backwoodsmen and Creole militia, paraded in line on the common, and fired a salute in their honor.

Thus did Clark gain the friendship of the forty tribes in the Northwest country.

CHAPTER XVIII

"AN' YE HAD BEEN WHERE I HAD BEEN"

We went back to Kaskaskia, Colonel Clark, Tom, and myself, and a great weight was lifted from our hearts.

A peaceful autumn passed, and we were happy save when we thought of those we had left at home. There is no space here to tell of many incidents. Great chiefs who had not been to the council came hundreds of leagues across wide rivers that they might see with their own eyes this man who had made peace without gold, and these had to be amused and entertained.

The apples ripened, and were shaken to the ground by the winds. The good Father Gibault, true to his promise, strove to teach me French. Indeed, I picked up much of that language in my intercourse with the inhabitants of Kaskaskia. How well I recall that simple life, — its dances, its songs, and the games with the laughing boys and girls on the common! And the good people were very kind to the orphan that dwelt with Colonel Clark, the drummer boy of his regiment.

But winter brought forebodings. When the garden patches grew bare and brown, and the bleak winds from across the Mississippi swept over the common, untoward tidings came like water dripping from a roof, bit by bit. And day by day Colonel Clark looked graver. The messengers he had sent to Vincennes came not back, and the *coureurs* and traders from time to time brought rumors of a British force gathering like a thundercloud in the northeast. Monsieur Vigo himself, who had gone to Vincennes on his own business, did not return. As for

the inhabitants, some of them who had once bowed to us with a smile now passed with faces averted.

The cold set the miry roads like cement, in ruts and ridges. A flurry of snow came and powdered the roofs even as the French loaves are powdered.

It was January. There was Colonel Clark on a runt of an Indian pony; Tom McChesney on another, riding ahead, several French gentlemen seated on stools in a two-wheeled cart, and myself. We were going to Cahokia, and it was very cold, and when the tireless wheels bumped from ridge to gully, the gentlemen grabbed each other as they slid about, and laughed.

All at once the merriment ceased, and looking forward we saw that Tom had leaped from his saddle and was bending over something in the snow. These chanced to be the footprints of some twenty men.

The immediate result of this alarming discovery was that Tom went on express to warn Captain Bowman, and the rest of us returned to a painful scene at Kaskaskia. We reached the village, the French gentlemen leaped down from their stools in the cart, and in ten minutes the streets were filled with frenzied, hooded figures. Hamilton, called the Hair Buyer, was upon them with no less than six hundred, and he would hang them to their own gateposts for listening to the Long Knives. These were but a handful after all was said. There was Father Gibault, for example. Father Gibault would doubtless be exposed to the crows in the belfry of his own church because he had busied himself at Vincennes and with other matters. Father Gibault was human, and therefore lovable. He bade his parishioners a hasty and tearful farewell, and he made a cold and painful journey to the territories of his Spanish Majesty across the Mississippi.

Father Gibault looked back, and against the gray of the winter's twilight there were flames like red maple leaves. In the fort the men stood to their guns, their faces flushed with staring at the burning houses. Only a few were burned,—enough to give no cover for Hamilton and his six hundred if they came.

But they did not come. The faithful Bowman and his men arrived instead, with the news that there had been only a roving party of forty, and these were now in full retreat.

Father Gibault came back. But where was Hamilton? This was the disquieting thing.

One bitter day, when the sun smiled mockingly on the powdered common, a horseman was perceived on the Fort Chartres road. It was Monsieur Vigo returning from Vincennes, but he had been first to St. Louis by reason of the value he set upon his head. Yes, Monsieur Vigo had been to Vincennes, remaining a little longer than he expected, the guest of Governor Hamilton. So Governor Hamilton had recaptured that place! Monsieur Vigo was no spy, hence he had gone first to St. Louis. Governor Hamilton was at Vincennes with much of King George's gold, and many supplies, and certain Indians who had not been at the council. Eight hundred in all, said Monsieur Vigo, using his fingers. And it was Governor Hamilton's design to march upon Kaskaskia and Cahokia and sweep over Kentucky; nay, he had already sent certain emissaries to McGillivray and his Creeks and the Southern Indians with presents, and these were to press forward on their side. The Governor could do nothing now, but would move as soon as the rigors of winter had somewhat relented. Monsieur Vigo shook his head and shrugged his shoulders. He loved *les Américains*. What would *Monsieur le Colonel* do now?

Monsieur le Colonel was grave, but this was his usual manner. He did not tear his hair, but the ways of the Long Knives were past understanding. He asked many questions. How was it with the garrison at Vincennes? Monsieur Vigo was exact, as a business man should be. They were now reduced to eighty men, and five hundred savages had gone out to ravage. There was no chance, then, of Hamilton moving at present? Monsieur Vigo threw up his hands. Never had he made such a trip, and he had been forced to come back by a northern route. The Wabash was as the Great Lakes, and the forests grew

out of the water. A fox could not go to Vincennes in this weather. A fish? Monsieur Vigo laughed heartily. Yes, a fish might.

"Then," said Colonel Clark, "we will be fish."

Monsieur Vigo stared, and passed his hand from his forehead backwards over his long hair. I leaned forward in my corner by the hickory fire.

"Then we will be fish," said Colonel Clark. "Better that than food for the crows. For, if we stay here, we shall be caught like bears in a trap, and Kentucky will be at Hamilton's mercy."

"*Sacré!*" exclaimed Monsieur Vigo, "you are mad, *mon ami*. I know what this country is, and you cannot get to Vincennes."

"I *will* get to Vincennes," said Colonel Clark, so gently that Monsieur Vigo knew he meant it. "I will *swim* to Vincennes."

Monsieur Vigo raised his hands to heaven. The three of us went out of the door and walked. There was a snowy place in front of the church all party-colored like a clown's coat, — scarlet capotes, yellow capotes, and blue capotes, and bright silk handkerchiefs. They surrounded the Colonel. *Pardieu*, what was he to do now? For the British governor and his savages were coming to take revenge on them because, in their necessity, they had declared for Congress. Colonel Clark went silently on his way to the gate; but Monsieur Vigo stopped, and Kaskaskia heard, with a shock, that this man of iron was to march against Vincennes.

The gates of the fort were shut, and the captains summoned. Undaunted woodsmen as they were, they were lukewarm, at first, at the idea of this march through the floods. Who can blame them? They had, indeed, sacrificed much. But in ten minutes they had caught his enthusiasm (which is one of the mysteries of genius). And the men paraded in the snow likewise caught it, and swung their hats at the notion of taking the Hair Buyer.

"'Tis no news to me," said Terence, stamping his feet on the flinty ground; "wasn't it Davy that pointed him

out to us and the hair liftin' from his head six months since?"

"Und you like schwimmin', yes?" said Swein Poulsson, his face like the rising sun with the cold.

"Swimmin', is it?" said Terence; "sure, the divil made worse things than wather. And Hamilton's beyant."

"I reckon that 'll fetch us through," Bill Cowan put in grimly.

It was a blessed thing that none of us had a bird's-eye view of that same water. No man of force will listen when his mind is made up, and perhaps it is just as well. For in that way things are accomplished. Clark would not listen to Monsieur Vigo, and hence the financier had, perforce, to listen to Clark. There were several miracles before we left. Monsieur Vigo, for instance, agreed to pay the expenses of the expedition, though in his heart he thought we should never get to Vincennes. Incidentally, he was never repaid. Then there were the French — yesterday, running hither and thither in paroxysms of fear; to-day, enlisting in whole companies, though it were easier to get to the wild geese of the swamps than to Hamilton. Their ladies stitched colors day and night, and presented them with simple confidence to the Colonel in the church. Twenty stands of colors for 170 men, counting those who had come from Cahokia. Think of the industry of it, of the enthusiasm behind it! Twenty stands of colors! Clark took them all, and in due time it will be told how the colors took Vincennes. This was because Colonel Clark was a man of destiny.

Furthermore, Colonel Clark was off the next morning at dawn to buy a Mississippi keel-boat. He had her rigged up with two four-pounders and four swivels, filled her with provisions, and called her the *Willing*. She was the first gunboat on the Western waters. A great fear came into my heart, and at dusk I stole back to the Colonel's house alone. The snow had turned to rain, and Terence stood guard within the doorway.

"Arrah," he said, "what ails ye, darlin'?"

I gulped and the tears sprang into my eyes; whereupon

Terence, in defiance of all military laws, laid his gun against the doorpost and put his arms around me, and I confided my fears. It was at this critical juncture that the door opened and Colonel Clark came out.

"What's to do here?" he demanded, gazing at us sternly.

"Savin' your Honor's prisence," said Terence, "he's afeard your Honor will be sending him on the boat. Sure, he wants to go swimmin' with the rest of us."

Colonel Clark frowned, bit his lip, and Terence seized his gun and stood to attention.

"It were right to leave you in Kaskaskia," said the Colonel; "the water will be over your head."

"The King's drum would be floatin' the likes of him," said the irrepressible Terence, "and the b'ys would be that lonesome."

The Colonel walked away without a word. In an hour's time he came back to find me cleaning his accoutrements by the fire. For a while he did not speak, but busied himself with his papers, I having lighted the candles for him. Presently he spoke my name, and I stood before him.

"I will give you a piece of advice, Davy," said he. "If you want a thing, go straight to the man that has it. McChesney has spoken to me about this wild notion of yours of going to Vincennes, and Cowan and McCann and Ray and a dozen others have dogged my footsteps."

"I only spoke to Terence because he asked me, sir," I answered. "I said nothing to any one else."

He laid down his pen and looked at me with an odd expression.

"What a weird little piece you are," he exclaimed; "you seem to have wormed your way into the hearts of these men. Do you know that you will probably never get to Vincennes alive?"

"I don't care, sir," I said. A happy thought struck me. "If they see a boy going through the water, sir—" I hesitated, abashed.

"What then?" said Clark, shortly.

"It may keep some from going back," I finished.

At that he gave a sort of gasp, and stared at me the more.

"Egad," he said, "I believe the good Lord launched you wrong end to. Perchance you will be a child when you are fifty."

He was silent a long time, and fell to musing. And I thought he had forgotten.

"May I go, sir?" I asked at length.

He started.

"Come here," said he. But when I was close to him he merely laid his hand on my shoulder. "Yes, you may go, Davy."

He sighed, and presently turned to his writing again, and I went back joyfully to my cleaning.

On a certain dark 4th of February, picture the village of Kaskaskia assembled on the river-bank in capote and hood. Ropes are cast off, the keel-boat pushes her blunt nose through the cold, muddy water, the oars churn up dirty, yellow foam, and cheers shake the sodden air. So the *Willing* left on her long journey: down the Kaskaskia, into the flood of the Mississippi, against many weary leagues of the Ohio's current, and up the swollen Wabash until they were to come to the mouth of the White River near Vincennes. There they were to await us.

Should we ever see them again? I think that this was the unspoken question in the hearts of the many who were to go by land.

The 5th was a mild, gray day, with the melting snow lying in patches on the brown bluff, and the sun making shift to pierce here and there. We formed the regiment in the fort, — backwoodsman and Creole now to fight for their common country, Jacques and Pierre and Alphonse; and mother and father, sweetheart and wife, waiting to wave a last good-by. Bravely we marched out of the gate and into the church for Father Gibault's blessing. And then, forming once more, we filed away on the road leading northward to the ferry, our colors flying, leaving the weeping, cheering crowd behind. In front of the tall men of the column was a wizened figure, beating madly on

a drum, stepping proudly with head thrown back. It was Cowan's voice that snapped the strain.

"Go it, Davy, my little gamecock!" he cried, and the men laughed and cheered. And so we came to the bleak ferry landing where we had crossed on that hot July night six months before.

We were soon on the prairies, and in the misty rain that fell and fell they seemed to melt afar into a gray and cheerless ocean. The sodden grass was matted now and unkempt. Lifeless lakes filled the depressions, and through them we waded mile after mile ankle-deep. There was a little cavalcade mounted on the tiny French ponies, and sometimes I rode with these; but oftenest Cowan or Tom would fling me, drum and all, on his shoulder. For we had reached the forest swamps where the water is the color of the Creole coffee. And day after day as we marched, the soft rain came out of the east and wet us to the skin.

It was a journey of torments, and even that first part of it was enough to discourage the most resolute spirit. Men might be led through it, but never driven. It is ever the mind which suffers through the monotonies of bodily discomfort, and none knew this better than Clark himself. Every morning as we set out with the wet hide chafing our skin, the Colonel would run the length of the regiment, crying: —

"Who gives the feast to-night, boys?"

Now it was Bowman's company, now McCarty's, now Bayley's. How the hunters vied with each other to supply the best, and spent the days stalking the deer cowering in the wet thickets. We crossed the Saline, and on the plains beyond was a great black patch, a herd of buffalo. A party of chosen men headed by Tom McChesney was sent after them, and never shall I forget the sight of the mad beasts charging through the water.

That night, when our chilled feet could bear no more, we sought out a patch of raised ground a little firmer than a quagmire, and heaped up the beginnings of a fire with such brush as could be made to burn, robbing the naked thickets. Saddle and steak sizzled, leather steamed and

stiffened, hearts and bodies thawed; grievances that men had nursed over miles of water melted. Courage sits best on a full stomach, and as they ate they cared not whether the Atlantic had opened between them and Vincennes. An hour agone, and there were twenty cursing laggards, counting the leagues back to Kaskaskia. Now: —

"C'était un vieux sauvage
Tout noir, tout barbouilla,
Ouich' ka!
Avec sa vieill' couverte
Et son sac à tabac.
Ouich' ka!
Ah! ah! tenaouich' tenaga,
Tenaouich' tenaga, ouich' ka!"

So sang Antoine, *dit le Gris*, in the pulsing red light. And when, between the verses, he went through the agonies of a Huron war-dance, the assembled regiment howled with delight. Some men know cities and those who dwell in the quarters of cities. But grizzled Antoine knew the half of a continent, and the manners of trading and killing of the tribes thereof.

And after Antoine came Gabriel, a marked contrast — Gabriel, five feet six, and the glare showing but a faint dark line on his quivering lip. Gabriel was a patriot, — a tribute we must pay to all of those brave Frenchmen who went with us. Nay, Gabriel had left at home on his little farm near the village a young wife of a fortnight. And so his lip quivered as he sang: —

"Petit Rocher de la Haute Montagne,
Je viens finir ici cette campagne!
Ah! doux échos, entendez mes soupirs;
En languissant je vais bientôt mourir!"

We had need of gayety after that, and so Bill Cowan sang "Billy of the Wild Wood," and Terence McCann wailed an Irish jig, stamping the water out of the spongy ground amidst storms of mirth. As he desisted, breathless and panting, he flung me up in the firelight before the eyes of them all, crying: —

"It's Davy can bate me!"

"Ay, Davy, Davy!" they shouted, for they were in the mood for anything. There stood Colonel Clark in the dimmer light of the background. "We must keep 'em screwed up, Davy," he had said that very day.

There came to me on the instant a wild song that my father had taught me when the liquor held him in dominance. Exhilarated, I sprang from Terence's arms to the sodden, bared space, and methinks I yet hear my shrill, piping note, and see my legs kicking in the fling of it. There was an uproar, a deeper voice chimed in, and here was McAndrew flinging his legs with mine: —

"I've faught on land, I've faught at sea,
At hame I faught my aunty, O;
But I met the deevil and Dundee
On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O.
An' ye had been where I had been,
Ye wad na be sae cantie, O;
An' ye had seen what I ha'e seen
On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O."

In the morning Clark himself would be the first off through the gray rain, laughing and shouting and waving his sword in the air, and I after him as hard as I could pelt through the mud, beating the charge on my drum until the war-cries of the regiment drowned the sound of it. For we were upon a pleasure trip — lest any man forget, — a pleasure trip amidst stark woods and brown plains flecked with ponds. So we followed him until we came to a place where, in summer, two quiet rivers flowed through green forests — the little Wabashes. And now! Now hickory and maple, oak and cottonwood, stood shivering in three feet of water on what had been a league of dry land. We stood dismayed at the crumbling edge of the hill, and one hundred and seventy pairs of eyes were turned on Clark. With a mere glance at the running stream high on the bank and the drowned forest beyond, he turned and faced them.

"I reckon you've earned a rest, boys," he said. "We'll have games to-day."

There were some dozen of the unflinching who needed not to be amused. Choosing a great poplar, these he set to hollowing out a pirogue, and himself came among the others and played leap-frog and the Indian game of ball until night fell. And these, instead of moping and quarrelling, forgot. That night, as I cooked him a buffalo steak, he drew near the fire with Bowman.

"For the love of God keep up their spirits, Bowman," said the Colonel; "keep up their spirits until we get them across. Once on the farther hills, they cannot go back."

Here was a different being from the shouting boy who had led the games and the war-dance that night in the circle of the blaze. Tired out, we went to sleep with the ring of the axes in our ears, and in the morning there were more games while the squad crossed the river to the drowned neck, built a rough scaffold there, and notched a trail across it; to the scaffold the baggage was ferried, and the next morning, bit by bit, the regiment. Even now the pains shoot through my body when I think of how man after man plunged waist-deep into the icy water toward the farther branch. The pirogue was filled with the weak, and in the end of it I was curled up with my drum.

Heroism is a many-sided thing. It is one matter to fight and finish, another to endure hell's tortures hour after hour. All day they waded with numbed feet vainly searching for a footing in the slime. Truly, the agony of a brave man is among the greatest of the world's tragedies to see. As they splashed onward through the tree-trunks, many a joke went forth, though lips were drawn and teeth pounded together. I have not the heart to recall these jokes, — it would seem a sacrilege. There were quarrels, too, the men striving to push one another from the easier paths; and deeds sublime when some straggler clutched at the bole of a tree for support, and was helped onward through excruciating ways. A dozen held tremblingly to the pirogue's gunwale, lest they fall and drown. One walked ahead with a smile, or else fell back to lend a helping shoulder to a fainting man.

And there was Tom McChesney. All day long I watched him, and thanked God that Polly Ann could not see him thus. And yet, how the pride would have leaped within her! Humor came not easily to him, but charity and courage and unselfishness he had in abundance. What he suffered none knew; but through those awful hours he was always among the stragglers, helping the weak and despairing when his strength might have taken him far ahead toward comfort and safety. "I'm all right, Davy," he would say, in answer to my look as he passed me. But on his face was written something that I did not understand.

How the Creole farmers and traders, unused even to the common ways of woodcraft, endured that fearful day and others that followed, I know not. And when a tardy justice shall arise and compel the people of this land to raise a shaft in memory of Clark and those who followed him, let not the loyalty of the French be forgotten, though it be not understood.

At eventide came to lurid and disordered brains the knowledge that the other branch was here. And, mercifully, it was shallower than the first. Holding his rifle high, with a war-whoop Bill Cowan plunged into the stream. Unable to contain myself more, I flung my drum overboard and went after it, and amid shouts and laughter I was towed across by James Ray.

Colonel Clark stood watching from the bank above, and it was he who pulled me, bedraggled, to dry land. I ran away to help gather brush for a fire. As I was heaping this in a pile I heard something that I should not have heard. Nor ought I to repeat it now, though I did not need the flames to send the blood tingling through my body.

"McChesney," said the Colonel, "we must thank our stars that we brought the boy along. He has grit, and as good a head as any of us. I reckon if it hadn't been for him some of them would have turned back long ago."

I saw Tom grinning at the Colonel as gratefully as though he himself had been praised.

The blaze started, and soon we had a bonfire. Some had not the strength to hold out the buffalo meat to the fire. Even the grumblers and mutineers were silent, owing to the ordeal they had gone through. But presently, when they began to be warmed and fed, they talked of other trials to be borne. The Embarrass and the big Wabash, for example. These must be like the sea itself.

"Take the back trail, if ye like," said Bill Cowan, with a loud laugh. "I reckon the rest of us kin float to Vincennes on Davy's drum."

But there was no taking the back trail now; and well they knew it. The games began, the unwilling being forced to play, and before they fell asleep that night they had taken Vincennes, scalped the Hair Buyer, and were far on the march to Detroit.

Mercifully, now that their stomachs were full, they had no worries. Few knew the danger we were in of being cut off by Hamilton's roving bands of Indians. There would be no retreat, no escape, but a fight to the death. And I heard this, and much more that was spoken of in low tones at the Colonel's fire far into the night, of which I never told the rank and file, — not even Tom McChesney.

On and on, through rain and water, we marched until we drew near to the river Embarrass. Drew near, did I say? "Sure, darlin'," said Terence, staring comically over the gray waste, "we've been in it since Choosd'y." There was small exaggeration in it. In vain did our feet seek the deeper water. It would go no higher than our knees, and the sound which the regiment made in marching was like that of a great flatboat going against the current. It had been a sad, lavender-colored day, and now that the gloom of the night was setting in, and not so much as a hummock showed itself above the surface, the Creoles began to murmur. And small wonder! Where was this man leading them, this Clark who had come amongst them from the skies, as it were? Did he know, himself? Night fell as though a blanket had been spread over the tree-tops, and above the dreary splashing men could be heard calling to one another in the darkness.

Nor was there any supper ahead. For our food was gone, and no game was to be shot over this watery waste. A cold like that of eternal space settled in our bones. Even Terence McCann grumbled.

"Begob," said he, "'tis fine weather for fishes, and the birrds are that comfortable in the threes. 'Tis no place for a baste at all, at all."

Sometime in the night there was a cry. Ray had found the water falling from an oozy bank, and there we dozed fitfully until we were startled by a distant boom.

It was Governor Hamilton's morning gun at Fort Sackville, Vincennes.

There was no breakfast. How we made our way, benumbed with hunger and cold, to the banks of the Wabash, I know not. Captain McCarty's company was set to making canoes, and the rest of us looked on apathetically as the huge trees staggered and fell amidst a fountain of spray in the shallow water. We were but three leagues from Vincennes. A raft was bound together, and Tom McChesney and three other scouts sent on a desperate journey across the river in search of boats and provisions, lest we starve and fall and die on the wet flats. Before he left Tom came to me, and the remembrance of his gaunt face haunted me for many years after. He drew something from his bosom and held it out to me, and I saw that it was a bit of buffalo steak which he had saved. I shook my head, and the tears came into my eyes.

"Come, Davy," he said, "ye're so little, and I beant hungry."

Again I shook my head, and for the life of me I could say nothing.

"I reckon Polly Ann'd never forgive me if anything was to happen to you," said he.

At that I grew strangely angry.

"It's you who need it," I cried, "it's you that has to do the work. And she told me to take care of you."

The big fellow grinned sheepishly, as was his wont.

"'Tis only a bite," he pleaded, "'twouldn't only make me hungry, and" — he looked hard at me — "and it might

be the savin' of you. Ye'll not eat it for Polly Ann's sake?" he asked coaxingly.

"'Twould not be serving her," I answered indignantly.

"Ye're an obstinate little deevil!" he cried, and, dropping the morsel on the freshly cut stump, he stalked away. I ran after him, crying out, but he leaped on the raft that was already in the stream and began to pole across. I slipped the piece into my own hunting shirt.

All day the men who were too weak to swing axes sat listless on the bank, watching in vain for some sight of the *Willing*. They saw a canoe rounding the bend instead, with a single occupant paddling madly. And who should this be but Captain Willing's own brother, escaped from the fort, where he had been a prisoner. He told us that a man named Maisonville, with a party of Indians, was in pursuit of him, and the next piece of news he had was in the way of raising our despair a little. Governor Hamilton's astonishment at seeing this force here and now would be as great as his own. Governor Hamilton had said, indeed, that only a navy could take Vincennes this year. Unfortunately, Mr. Willing brought no food. Next in order came five Frenchmen, trapped by our scouts, nor had they any provisions. But as long as I live I shall never forget how Tom McChesney returned at nightfall, the hero of the hour. He had shot a deer; and never did wolves pick an animal cleaner. They pressed on me a choice piece of it, these great-hearted men who were willing to go hungry for the sake of a child, and when I refused it they would have forced it down my throat. Swein Poulsson, he that once hid under the bed, deserves a special tablet to his memory. He was for giving me all he had, though his little eyes were unnaturally bright and the red had left his cheeks now.

"He haf no belly, only a leedle on his backbone!" he cried.

"Begob, thin, he has the backbone," said Terence.

"I have a piece," said I, and drew forth that which Tom had given me.

They brought a quarter of a saddle to Colonel Clark,

but he smiled at them kindly and told them to divide it amongst the weak. He looked at me as I sat with my feet crossed on the stump.

"I will follow Davy's example," said he.

At length the canoes were finished and we crossed the river, swimming over the few miserable skeletons of the French ponies we had brought along. We came to a sugar camp, and beyond it, stretching between us and Vincennes, was a sea of water. Here we made our camp, if camp it could be called. There was no fire, no food, and the water seeped out of the ground on which we lay. Some of those even who had not yet spoken now openly said that we could go no farther. For the wind had shifted into the northwest, and, for the first time since we had left Kaskaskia we saw the stars gleaming like scattered diamonds in the sky. Bit by bit the ground hardened, and if by chance we dozed we stuck to it. Morning found the men huddled like sheep, their hunting shirts hard as boards, and long before Hamilton's gun we were up and stamping. Antoine poked the butt of his rifle through the ice of the lake in front of us.

"I think we not get to Vincennes this day," he said.

Colonel Clark, who heard him, turned to me.

"Fetch McChesney here, Davy," he said. Tom came.

"McChesney," said he, "when I give the word, take Davy and his drum on your shoulders and follow me. And Davy, do you think you can sing that song you gave us the other night?"

"Oh, yes, sir," I answered.

Without more ado the Colonel broke the skim of ice, and, taking some of the water in his hand, poured powder from his flask into it and rubbed it on his face until he was the color of an Indian. Stepping back, he raised his sword high in the air, and, shouting the Shawanee war-whoop, took a flying leap up to his thighs in the water. Tom swung me instantly to his shoulder and followed, I beating the charge with all my might, though my hands were so numb that I could scarce hold the sticks. Strangest of all, to a man they came shouting after us.

"Beating the charge with all my might."

"Now, Davy!" said the Colonel.

"I've faught on land, I've faught at sea,
At hame I faught my aunty, O;
But I met the deevil and Dundee
On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O."

I piped it at the top of my voice, and sure enough the regiment took up the chorus, for it had a famous swing.

"An' ye had been where I had been,
Ye wad na be sae cantie, O;
An' ye had seen what I ha'e seen
On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O."

When their breath was gone we heard Cowan shout that he had found a path under his feet, — a path that was on dry land in the summer-time. We followed it, feeling carefully, and at length, when we had suffered all that we could bear, we stumbled on to a dry ridge. Here we spent another night of torture, with a second backwater facing us coated with a full inch of ice.

And still there was nothing to eat.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HAIR BUYER TRAPPED

To lie the night on adamant, pierced by the needles of the frost; to awake shivering and famished, until the meaning of an inch of ice on the backwater comes to your mind, — these are not calculated to put a man into an equable mood to listen to oratory. Nevertheless there was a kind of oratory to fit the case. To picture the misery of these men is well-nigh impossible. They stood sluggishly in groups, dazed by suffering, and their faces were drawn and their eyes ringed, their beards and hair matted. And many found it in their hearts to curse Clark and that government for which he fought.

When the red fire of the sun glowed through the bare branches that morning, it seemed as if the campaign had spent itself like an arrow which drops at the foot of the mark. Could life and interest and enthusiasm be infused again in such as these? I have ceased to marvel how it was done. A man no less haggard than the rest, but with a compelling force in his eyes, pointed with a blade to the hills across the river. They must get to them, he said, and their troubles would be ended. He said more, and they cheered him. These are the bare facts. He picked a man here, and another there, and these went silently to a grim duty behind the regiment.

"If any try to go back, shoot them down!" he cried.

Then with a gun-butt he shattered the ice and was the first to leap into the water under it. They followed, some with a cheer that was most pitiful of all. They followed him blindly, as men go to torture, but they followed him, and the splashing and crushing of the ice were sounds to

freeze my body. I was put in a canoe. In my day I have beheld great suffering and hardship, and none of it compared to this. Torn with pity, I saw them reeling through the water, now grasping trees and bushes to try to keep their feet, the strongest breaking the way ahead and supporting the weak between them. More than once Clark himself tottered where he beat the ice at the apex of the line. Some swooned and would have drowned had they not been dragged across the canoe and chafed back to consciousness. By inches the water shallowed. Clark reached the high ground, and then Bill Cowan, with a man on each shoulder. Then others endured to the shallows to fall heavily in the crumbled ice and be dragged out before they died. But at length, by God's grace, the whole regiment was on the land. Fires would not revive some, but Clark himself seized a fainting man by the arms and walked him up and down in the sunlight until his blood ran again.

It was a glorious day, a day when the sap ran in the maples, and the sun soared upwards in a sky of the palest blue. All this we saw through the tracery of the leafless branches, — a mirthless, shivering crowd, crept through a hell of weather into the Hair Buyer's very lair. Had he neither heard nor seen?

Down the steel-blue lane of water between the ice came a canoe. Our stunted senses perceived it, unresponsive. A man cried out (it was Tom McChesney) ; now some of them had leaped into the pirogue, now they were returning. In the towed canoe two fat and stolid squaws and a pappoose were huddled, and beside them — God be praised! — food. A piece of buffalo on its way to town, and in the end compartment of the boat tallow and bear's grease lay revealed by two blows of the tomahawk. The kettles — long disused — were fetched, and broth made and fed in sips to the weakest, while the strongest looked on and smiled in an agony of self-restraint. It was a fearful thing to see men whose legs had refused service struggle to their feet when they had drunk the steaming, greasy mixture. And the Colonel, standing by the river's edge,

turned his face away — down-stream. And then, as often, I saw the other side of the man. Suddenly he looked at me, standing wistful at his side.

"They have cursed me," said he, by way of a question, "they have cursed me every day." And seeing me silent, he insisted, "Tell me, is it not so, Davy?"

"It is so," I said, wondering that he should pry, "but it was while they suffered. And — and some refrained."

"And you?" he asked queerly.

"I — I could not, sir. For I asked leave to come."

"If they have condemned me to a thousand hells," said he, dispassionately, "I should not blame them." Again he looked at me. "Do you understand what you have done?" he asked.

"No, sir," I said uneasily.

"And yet there are some human qualities in you, Davy. You have been worth more to me than another regiment."

I stared.

"When you grow older, if you ever do, tell your children that once upon a time you put a hundred men to shame. It is no small thing."

Seeing him relapse into silence, I did not speak. For the space of half an hour he stared down the river, and I knew that he was looking vainly for the *Willing*.

At noon we crossed, piecemeal, a deep lake in the canoes, and marching awhile came to a timber-covered rise which our French prisoners named as the Warriors' Island. And from the shelter of its trees we saw the steely lines of a score of low ponds, and over the tops of as many ridges a huddle of brown houses on the higher ground.

And this was the place we had all but sold our lives to behold! This was Vincennes at last! We were on the heights behind the town, — we were at the back door, as it were. At the far side, on the Wabash River, was the front door, or Fort Sackville, where the banner of England snapped in the February breeze.

We stood there, looking, as the afternoon light flooded the plain. Suddenly the silence was broken.

"Hooray for Clark!" cried a man at the edge of the copse.

"Hooray for Clark!" — it was the whole regiment this time. From execration to exaltation was but a step, after all. And the Creoles fell to scoffing at their sufferings and even forgot their hunger in staring at the goal. The backwoodsmen took matters more stolidly, having acquired long since the art of waiting. They lounged about, cleaning their guns, watching the myriad flocks of wild ducks and geese casting blue-black shadows on the ponds.

"Arrah, McChesney," said Terence, as he watched the circling birds, "Clark's a great man, but 'tis more riverince I'd have for him if wan av thim was sizzling on the end of me ramrod."

"I'd sooner hev the Ha'r Buyer's sculp," said Tom.

Presently there was a drama performed for our delectation. A shot came down the wind, and we perceived that several innocent Creole gentlemen, unconscious of what the timber held, were shooting the ducks and geese. Whereupon Clark chose Antoine and three of our own Creoles to sally out and shoot likewise — as decoys. We watched them working their way over the ridges, and finally saw them coming back with one of the Vincennes sportsmen. I cannot begin to depict the astonishment of this man when he reached the copse, and was led before our lean, square-shouldered commander. Yes, monsieur, he was a friend of *les Américains*. Did Governor Hamilton know that a visit was imminent? *Pardieu* (with many shrugs and outward gestures of the palms), Governor Hamilton had said if the Long Knives had wings or fins they might reach him now — he was all unprepared.

"Gentlemen," said Colonel Clark to Captains Bowman and McCarty and Williams, "we have come so far by audacity, and we must continue by audacity. It is of no use to wait for the gunboat, and every moment we run the risk of discovery. I shall write an open letter to the inhabitants of Vincennes, which the prisoner shall take into town. I shall tell them that those who are true to the oath they swore to Father Gibault shall not be molested

if they remain quietly in their houses. Let those who are on the side of the Hair Buyer General and his King go to the fort and fight there."

He bade me fetch the portfolio he carried, and with numbed fingers wrote the letter while his captains stared in admiration and amazement. What a stroke was this! There were six hundred men in the town and fort, — soldiers, inhabitants, and Indians, — while we had but 170, starved and weakened by their incredible march. But Clark was not to be daunted. Whipping out his field-glasses, he took a stand on a little mound under the trees and followed the fast-galloping messenger across the plain; saw him enter the town; saw the stir in the streets, knots of men riding out and gazing, hands on foreheads, towards the place where we were. But, as the minutes rolled into hours, there was no further alarm. No gun, no beat to quarters or bugle-call from Fort Sackville. What could it mean?

Clark's next move was an enigma, for he set the men to cutting and trimming tall sapling poles. To these were tied (how reverently!) the twenty stands of colors which loving Creole hands had stitched. The boisterous day was reddening to its close as the Colonel lined his little army in front of the wood, and we covered the space of four thousand. For the men were twenty feet apart and every tenth carried a standard. Suddenly we were aghast as the full meaning of the inspiration dawned upon us. The command was given, and we started on our march toward Vincennes. But not straight, — zigzagging, always keeping the ridges between us and the town, and to the watching inhabitants it seemed as if thousands were coming to crush them. Night fell, the colors were furled and the saplings dropped, and we pressed into serried ranks and marched straight over hill and dale for the lights that were beginning to twinkle ahead of us.

We halted once more, a quarter of a mile away. Clark himself had picked fourteen men to go under Lieutenant Bayley through the town and take the fort from the other side. Here was audacity with a vengeance. You may be sure that Tom and Cowan and Ray were among these, and

I trotted after them with the drum banging against my thighs.

Was ever stronghold taken thus?

They went right into the town, the fourteen of them, into the main street that led directly to the fort. The simple citizens gave back, stupefied, at sight of the tall, striding forms. Muffled Indians stood like statues as we passed, but these raised not a hand against us. Where were Hamilton, Hamilton's soldiers and savages? It was as if we had come a-trading.

The street rose and fell in waves, like the prairie over which it ran. As we climbed a ridge, here was a little log church, the rude cross on the belfry showing dark against the sky. And there, in front of us, flanked by blockhouses with conical caps, was the frowning mass of Fort Sackville.

"Take cover," said Williams, hoarsely. It seemed incredible.

The men spread hither and thither, some at the corners of the church, some behind the fences of the little gardens. Tom chose a great forest tree that had been left standing, and I went with him. He powdered his pan, and I laid down my drum beside the tree, and then, with an impulse that was rare, Tom seized me by the collar and drew me to him.

"Davy," he whispered, and I pinched him. "Davy, I reckon Polly Ann'd be kinder surprised if she knew where we was. Eh?"

I nodded. It seemed strange, indeed, to be talking thus at such a place. Life has taught me since that it was not so strange, for however a man may strive and suffer for an object, he usually sits quiet at the consummation. Here we were in the door-yard of a peaceful cabin, the ground frozen in lumps under our feet, and it seemed to me that the wind had something to do with the lightness of the night.

"Davy," whispered Tom again, "how'd ye like to see the little feller to home?"

I pinched him again, and harder this time, for I was at

a loss for adequate words. The muscles of his legs were as hard as the strands of a rope, and his buckskin breeches frozen so that they cracked under my fingers.

Suddenly a flickering light arose ahead of us, and another, and we saw that they were candles beginning to twinkle through the palings of the fort. These were badly set, the width of a man's hand apart. Presently here comes a soldier with a torch, and as he walked we could see from crack to crack his bluff face all reddened by the light, and so near were we that we heard the words of his song: —

> "O, there came a lass to Sudbury Fair,
> With a hey, and a ho, nonny-nonny!
> And she had a rose in her raven hair,
> With a hey, and a ho, nonny-nonny!"

"By the etarnal!" said Tom, following the man along the palings with the muzzle of his Deckard, "by the etarnal! 'tis like shootin' beef."

A gust of laughter came from somewhere beyond. The burly soldier paused at the foot of the blockhouse.

"Hi, Jem, have ye seen the General's man? His Honor's in a 'igh temper, I warrant ye."

It was fortunate for Jem that he put his foot inside the blockhouse door.

"Now, boys!"

It was Williams's voice, and fourteen rifles sputtered out a ragged volley.

There was an instant's silence, and then a score of voices raised in consternation, — shouting, cursing, commanding. Heavy feet pounded on the platform of the blockhouse. While Tom was savagely jamming in powder and ball, the wicket gate of the fort opened, a man came out and ran to a house a biscuit's throw away, and ran back again before he was shot at, slamming the gate after him. Tom swore.

"We've got but the ten rounds," he said, dropping his rifle to his knee. "I reckon 'tis no use to waste it."

"The *Willing* may come to-night," I answered.

There was a bugle winding a strange call, and the roll of a drum, and the running continued.

"Don't fire till you're sure, boys," said Captain Williams.

Our eyes caught sight of a form in the blockhouse port, there was an instant when a candle flung its rays upon a cannon's flank, and Tom's rifle spat a rod of flame. A red blot hid the cannon's mouth, and behind it a man staggered and fell on the candle, while the shot crunched its way through the logs of the cottage in the yard where we stood. And now the battle was on in earnest, fire darting here and there from the black wall, bullets whistling and flying wide, and at intervals cannon belching, their shot grinding through trees and houses. But our men waited until the gunners lit their matches in the cannon-ports, — it was no trick for a backwoodsman.

At length there came a popping right and left, and we knew that Bowman and McCarty's men had swung into position there.

An hour passed, and a shadow came along our line, darting from cover to cover. It was Lieutenant Bayley, and he sent me back to find the Colonel and to tell him that the men had but a few rounds left. I sped through the streets on the errand, spied a Creole company waiting in reserve, and near them, behind a warehouse, a knot of backwoodsmen, French, and Indians, lighted up by a smoking torch. And here was Colonel Clark talking to a big, blanketed chief. I was hovering around the skirts of the crowd and seeking for an opening, when a hand pulled me off my feet.

"What 'll ye be afther now?" said a voice, which was Terence's.

"Let me go," I cried, "I have a message from Lieutenant Bayley."

"Sure," said Terence, "a man'd think ye had the Hair Buyer's sculp in yere pocket. The Colonel is treaty-makin' with Tobaccy's Son, the grreatest Injun in these parrts."

"I don't care."

"Hist!" said Terence.

"Let me go," I yelled, so loudly that the Colonel turned, and Terence dropped me like a live coal. I wormed my way to where Clark stood. Tobacco's Son was at that moment protesting that the Big Knives were his brothers, and declaring that before morning broke he would have one hundred warriors for the Great White Chief. Had he not made a treaty of peace with Captain Helm, who was even then a prisoner of the British general in the fort?

Colonel Clark replied that he knew well of the fidelity of Tobacco's Son to the Big Knives, that Tobacco's Son had remained stanch in the face of bribes and presents (this was true). Now all that Colonel Clark desired of Tobacco's Son besides his friendship was that he would keep his warriors from battle. The Big Knives would fight their own fight. To this sentiment Tobacco's Son grunted extreme approval. Colonel Clark turned to me.

"What is it, Davy?" he asked.

I told him.

"Tobacco's Son has dug up for us King George's ammunition," he said. "Go tell Lieutenant Bayley that I will send him enough to last him a month."

I sped away with the message. Presently I came back again, upon another message, and they were eating, — those reserves, — they were eating as I had never seen men eat but once, at Kaskaskia. The baker stood by with lifted palms, imploring the saints that he might have some compensation, until Clark sent him back to his shop to knead and bake again. The good Creoles approached the fires with the contents of their larders in their hands. Terence tossed me a loaf the size of a cannon ball, and another.

"Fetch that wan to wan av the b'ys," said he.

I seized as much as my arms could hold and scurried away to the firing line once more, and, heedless of whistling bullets, darted from man to man until the bread was exhausted. Not a one but gave me a "God bless you, Davy," ere he seized it with a great hand and began to eat in wolfish bites, his Deckard always on the watch the while.

There was no sleep in the village. All night long while the rifles sputtered, the villagers in their capotes — men, women, and children — huddled around the fires. The young men of the militia begged Clark to allow them to fight, and to keep them well affected he sent some here and there amongst our lines. For our Colonel's strength was not counted by rifles or men alone: he fought with his brain. As Hamilton, the Hair Buyer, made his rounds, he believed the town to be in possession of a horde of Kentuckians. Shouts, war-whoops, and bursts of laughter went up from behind the town. Surely a great force was there, a small part of which had been sent to play with him and his men. On the fighting line, when there was a lull, our backwoodsmen stood up behind their trees and cursed the enemy roundly, and often by these taunts persuaded the furious gunners to open their ports and fire their cannon. Woe be to him that showed an arm or a shoulder! Though a casement be lifted ever so warily, a dozen balls would fly into it. And at length, when some of the besieged had died in their anger, the ports were opened no more. It was then our sharpshooters crept up boldly to within thirty yards of them — nay, it seemed as if they lay under the very walls of the fort. And through the night the figure of the Colonel himself was often seen amongst them, praising their markmanship, pleading with every man not to expose himself without cause. He spied me where I had wormed myself behind the foot-board of a picket fence beneath the cannon-port of a blockhouse. It was during one of the breathing spaces.

"What's this?" said he to Cowan, sharply, feeling me with his foot.

"I reckon it's Davy, sir," said my friend, somewhat sheepishly. "We can't do nothin' with him. He's been up and down the line twenty times this night."

"What doing?" says the Colonel.

"Bread and powder and bullets," answered Bill.

"But that's all over," says Clark.

"He's the very devil to pry," answered Bill. "The first we know he'll be into the fort under the logs."

"Or between them," says Clark, with a glance at the open palings. "Come here, Davy."

I followed him, dodging between the houses, and when we had got off the line he took me by the two shoulders from behind.

"You little rascal," said he, shaking me, "how am I to look out for an army and you besides? Have you had anything to eat?"

"Yes, sir," I answered.

We came to the fires, and Captain Bowman hurried up to meet him.

"We're piling up earthworks and barricades," said the Captain, "for the fight to-morrow. My God! if the *Willing* would only come, we could put our cannon into them."

Clark laughed.

"Bowman," said he, kindly, "has Davy fed you yet?"

"No," says the Captain, surprised, "I've had no time to eat."

"He seems to have fed the whole army," said the Colonel. He paused. "Have they scented Lamothe or Maisonville?"

"Devil a scent!" cried the Captain, "and we've scoured wood and quagmire. They tell me that Lamothe has a very pretty force of redskins at his heels."

"Let McChesney go," said Clark sharply, "McChesney and Ray. I'll warrant they can find 'em."

Now I knew that Maisonville had gone out a-chasing Captain Willing's brother, — he who had run into our arms. Lamothe was a noted Indian partisan and a dangerous man to be dogging our rear that night. Suddenly there came a thought that took my breath and set my heart a-hammering. When the Colonel's back was turned I slipped away beyond the range of the firelight, and I was soon on the prairie, stumbling over hummocks and floundering into ponds, yet going as quietly as I could, turning now and again to look back at the distant glow or to listen to the rifles popping around the fort. The night was cloudy and pitchy dark. Twice the whirring of

startled waterfowl frightened me out of my senses, but ambition pricked me on in spite of fear. I may have gone a mile thus, perchance two or three, straining every sense, when a sound brought me to a stand. At first I could not distinguish it because of my heavy breathing, but presently I made sure that it was the low drone of human voices. Getting down on my hands and knees, I crept forward, and felt the ground rising. The voices had ceased. I gained the crest of a low ridge, and threw myself flat. A rattle of musketry set me shivering, and in an agony of fright I looked behind me to discover that I could not be more than four hundred yards from the fort. I had made a circle. I lay very still, my eyes watered with staring, and then — the droning began again. I went forward an inch, then another and another down the slope, and at last I could have sworn that I saw dark blurs against the ground. I put out my hand, my weight went after, and I had crashed through a coating of ice up to my elbow in a pool. There came a second of sheer terror, a hoarse challenge in French, and then I took to my heels and flew towards the fort at the top of my speed.

I heard them coming after me, leap and bound, and crying out to one another. Ahead of me there might have been a floor or a precipice, as the ground looks level at night. I hurt my foot cruelly on a frozen clod of earth, slid down the washed bank of a run into the Wabash, picked myself up, scrambled to the top of the far side, and had gotten away again when my pursuer shattered the ice behind me. A hundred yards more, two figures loomed up in front, and I was pulled up choking.

"Hang to him, Fletcher!" said a voice.

"Great God!" cried Fletcher, "it's Davy. What are ye up to now?"

"Let me go!" I cried, as soon as I had got my wind. As luck would have it, I had run into a pair of daredevil young Kentuckians who had more than once tasted the severity of Clark's discipline, — Fletcher Blount and Jim Willis. They fairly shook out of me what had happened, and then dropped me with a war-whoop and started for

the prairie, I after them, crying out to them to beware of the run. A man must indeed be fleet of foot to have escaped these young ruffians, and so it proved. When I reached the hollow there were the two of them fighting with a man in the water, the ice jangling as they shifted their feet.

"What's yere name?" said Fletcher, cuffing and kicking his prisoner until he cried out for mercy.

"Maisonville," said the man, whereupon Fletcher gave a war-whoop and kicked him again.

"That's no way to use a prisoner," said I, hotly.

"Hold your mouth, Davy," said Fletcher, "you didn't ketch him."

"You wouldn't have had him but for me," I retorted.

Fletcher's answer was an oath. They put Maisonville between them, ran him through the town up to the firing line, and there, to my horror, they tied him to a post and used him for a shield, despite his heart-rending yells. In mortal fear that the poor man would be shot down, I was running away to find some one who might have influence over them when I met a lieutenant. He came up and ordered them angrily to unbind Maisonville and bring him before the Colonel. Fletcher laughed, whipped out his hunting knife, and cut the thongs; but he and Willis had scarce got twenty paces from the officer before they seized poor Maisonville by the hair and made shift to scalp him. This was merely backwoods play, had Maisonville but known it. Persuaded, however, that his last hour was come, he made a desperate effort to clear himself, whereupon Fletcher cut off a piece of his skin by mistake. Maisonville, making sure that he had been scalped, stood groaning and clapping his hand to his head, while the two young rascals drew back and stared at each other.

"What's to do now?" said Willis.

"Take our medicine, I reckon," answered Fletcher, grimly. And they seized the tottering man between them, and marched him straightway to the fire where Clark stood.

They had seen the Colonel angry before, but now they

were fairly withered under his wrath. And he could have given them no greater punishment, for he took them from the firing line, and sent them back to wait among the reserves until the morning.

"*Nom de Dieu!*" said Maisonville, wrathfully, as he watched them go, "they should hang."

"The stuff that brought them here through ice and flood is apt to boil over, Captain," remarked the Colonel, dryly.

"If you please, sir," said I, "they did not mean to cut him, but he wriggled."

Clark turned sharply.

"Eh?" said he, "did you have a hand in this, too?"

"*Peste!*" cried the Captain, "the little ferret — you call him — he find me on the prairie. I run to catch him with some men and fall into the crick —" he pointed to his soaked leggings, "and your demons, they fall on top of me."

"I wish to heaven you had caught Lamothe instead, Davy," said the Colonel, and joined despite himself in the laugh that went up. Falling sober again, he began to question the prisoner. Where was Lamothe? *Pardieu*, Maisonville could not say. How many men did he have, etc., etc.? The circle about us deepened with eager listeners, who uttered exclamations when Maisonville, between his answers, put up his hand to his bleeding head. Suddenly the circle parted, and Captain Bowman came through.

"Ray has discovered Lamothe, sir," said he. "What shall we do?"

"Let him into the fort," said Clark, instantly.

There was a murmur of astonished protest.

"Let him into the fort!" exclaimed Bowman.

"Certainly," said the Colonel; "if he finds he cannot get in, he will be off before the dawn to assemble the tribes."

"But the fort is provisioned for a month," Bowman expostulated; "and they must find out to-morrow how weak we are."

"To-morrow will be too late," said Clark.

"And suppose he shouldn't go in?"

"He will go in," said the Colonel, quietly. "Withdraw your men, Captain, from the north side."

Captain Bowman departed. Whatever he may have thought of these orders, he was too faithful a friend of the Colonel's to delay their execution. Murmuring, swearing oaths of astonishment, man after man on the firing line dropped his rifle at the word, and sullenly retreated. The crack, crack of the Deckards on the south and east were stilled; not a barrel was thrust by the weary garrison through the logs, and the place became silent as the wilderness. It was the long hour before the dawn. And as we lay waiting on the hard ground, stiff and cold and hungry, talking in whispers, somewhere near six of the clock on that February morning the great square of Fort Sackville began to take shape. There was the long line of the stockade, the projecting blockhouses at each corner with peaked caps, and a higher capped square tower from the centre of the enclosure, the banner of England drooping there and clinging forlorn to its staff, as though with a presentiment. Then, as the light grew, the close-lipped casements were seen, scarred with our bullets. The little log houses of the town came out, the sapling palings and the bare trees, — all grim and gaunt at that cruel season. Cattle lowed here and there, and horses whinnied to be fed.

It was a dirty, gray dawn, and we waited until it had done its best. From where we lay hid behind log house and palings we strained our eyes towards the prairie to see if Lamothe would take the bait, until our view was ended at the fuzzy top of a hillock. Bill Cowan, doubled up behind a woodpile and breathing heavily, nudged me.

"Davy, Davy, what d'ye see!"

Was it a head that broke the line of the crest? Even as I stared, breathless, half a score of forms shot up and were running madly for the stockade. Twenty more broke after them, Indians and Frenchmen, dodging, swaying, crowding, looking fearfully to right and left. And

from within the fort came forth a hubbub, — cries and scuffling, orders, oaths, and shouts. In plain view of our impatient Deckards soldiers manned the platform, and we saw that they were flinging down ladders. An officer in a faded scarlet coat stood out among the rest, shouting himself hoarse. Involuntarily Cowan lined his sights across the woodpile on this mark of color.

Lamothe's men, a seething mass, were fighting like wolves for the ladders, fearful yet that a volley might kill half of them where they stood. And so fast did they scramble upwards that the men before them stepped on their fingers. All at once and by acclamation the fierce war-whoops of our men rent the air, and some toppled in sheer terror and fell the twelve feet of the stockade at the sound of it. Then every man in the regiment, Creole and backwoodsman, lay back to laugh. The answer of the garrison was a defiant cheer, and those who had dropped, finding they were not shot at, picked themselves up again and gained the top, helping to pull the ladders after them. Bowman's men swung back into place, the rattle and drag were heard in the blockhouse as the cannon were run out through the ports, and the battle which had held through the night watches began again with redoubled vigor. But there was more caution on the side of the British, for they had learned dearly how the Kentuckians could measure crack and crevice.

There followed two hours and a futile waste of ammunition, the lead from the garrison flying harmless here and there, and not a patch of skin or cloth showing.

CHAPTER XX

THE CAMPAIGN ENDS

"*If I am obliged to storm, you may depend upon such treatment as is justly due to a murderer. And beware of destroying stores of any kind, or any papers or letters that are in your possession; or of hurting one house in the town. For, by Heaven! if you do, there shall be no mercy shown you.*

"*To Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton.*"

So read Colonel Clark, as he stood before the log fire in Monsieur Bouton's house at the back of the town, the captains grouped in front of him.

"Is that strong enough, gentlemen?" he asked.

"To raise his hair," said Captain Charleville.

Captain Bowman laughed loudly.

"I reckon the boys will see to that," said he.

Colonel Clark folded the letter, addressed it, and turned gravely to Monsieur Bouton.

"You will oblige me, sir," said he, "by taking this to Governor Hamilton. You will be provided with a flag of truce."

Monsieur Bouton was a round little man, as his name suggested, and the men cheered him as he strode soberly up the street, a piece of sheeting tied to a sapling and flung over his shoulder. Through such humble agencies are the ends of Providence accomplished. Monsieur Bouton walked up to the gate, disappeared sidewise through the postern, and we sat down to breakfast. In a very short time Monsieur Bouton was seen coming back, and his face was not so impassive that the governor's message could not be read thereon.

"'Tis not a love-letter he has, I'll warrant," said Terence, as the little man disappeared into the house. So accurately had Monsieur Bouton's face betrayed the news that the men went back to their posts without orders, some with half a breakfast in hand. And soon the rank and file had the message.

"*Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton begs leave to acquaint Colonel Clark that he and his garrison are not disposed to be awed into any action unworthy of British subjects.*"

Our men had eaten, their enemy was within their grasp, and Clark and all his officers could scarce keep them from storming. Such was the deadliness of their aim that scarce a shot came back, and time and again I saw men fling themselves in front of the breastworks with a war-whoop, wave their rifles in the air, and cry out that they would have the Ha'r Buyer's sculp before night should fall. It could not last. Not tuned to the nicer courtesies of warfare, the memory of Hamilton's war parties, of blackened homes, of families dead and missing, raged unappeased. These were not content to leave vengeance in the Lord's hands, and when a white flag peeped timorously above the gate a great yell of derision went up from river-bank to river-bank. Out of the postern stepped the officer with the faded scarlet coat, and in due time went back again, haughtily, his head high, casting contempt right and left of him. Again the postern opened, and this time there was a cheer at sight of a man in hunting shirt and leggings and coonskin cap. After him came a certain Major Hay, Indian-enticer of detested memory, the lieutenant of him who followed — the Hair Buyer himself. A murmur of hatred arose from the men stationed there, and many would have shot him where he stood but for Clark.

"The devil has the grit," said Cowan, though his eyes blazed.

It was the involuntary tribute. Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton stared indifferently at the glowering backwoodsmen as he walked the few steps to the church.

Not so Major Hay. His eyes fell. There was Colonel Clark waiting at the door through which the good Creoles had been wont to go to worship, bowing somewhat ironically to the British General. It was a strange meeting they had in St. Xavier's, by the light of the candles on the altar. Hot words passed in that house of peace, the General demanding protection for all his men, and our Colonel replying that he would do with the Indian partisans as he chose.

"And whom mean you by Indian partisans?" the undaunted governor had demanded.

"I take Major Hay to be one of them," our Colonel had answered.

It was soon a matter of common report how Clark had gazed fixedly at the Major when he said this, and how the Major turned pale and trembled. With our own eyes we saw them coming out, Major Hay as near to staggering as a man could be, the governor blushing red for shame of him. So they went sorrowfully back to the gate.

Colonel Clark stood at the steps of the church, looking after them.

"What was that firing?" he demanded sharply. "I gave orders for a truce."

We who stood by the church had indeed heard firing in the direction of the hills east of the town, and had wondered thereat. Perceiving a crowd gathered at the far end of the street, we all ran thither save the Colonel, who directed to have the offenders brought to him at Monsieur Bouton's. We met the news halfway. A party of Canadians and Indians had just returned from the Falls of the Ohio with scalps they had taken. Captain Williams had gone out with his company to meet them, had lured them on, and finally had killed a number and was returning with the prisoners. Yes, here they were! Williams himself walked ahead with two dishevelled and frightened *coureurs du bois*, twoscore at least of the townspeople of Vincennes, friends and relatives of the prisoners, pressing about and crying out to Williams to have mercy on them. As for Williams, he took them in to the Colonel, the towns-

people pressing into the door-yard and banking in front of it on the street. Behind all a tragedy impended, nor can I think of it now without sickening.

The frightened Creoles in the street gave back against the fence, and from behind them, issuing as a storm-cloud, came the half of Williams' company, yelling like madmen. Pushed and jostled ahead of them were four Indians, decked and feathered, the half-dried scalps dangling from their belts, impassive, true to their creed despite the indignity of jolts and jars and blows. On and on pressed the mob, gathering recruits at every corner, and when they reached St. Xavier's before the fort half the regiment was there. Others watched, too, from the stockade, and what they saw made their knees smite together with fear. Here were four bronzed statues in a row across the street, the space in front of them clear that their partisans in the fort might look and consider. What was passing in the savage mind no man might know. Not a lip trembled nor an eye faltered when a backwoodsman, his memory aflame at sight of the pitiful white scalps on their belts, thrust through the crowd to curse them. Fletcher Blount, frenzied, snatched his tomahawk from his side.

"Sink, varmint!" he cried with a great oath. "By the etarnal! we'll pay the H'ar Buyer in his own coin. Sound your drums!" he shouted at the fort. "Call the garrison fer the show."

He had raised his arm and turned to strike when the savage put up his hand, not in entreaty, but as one man demanding a right from another. The cries, the curses, the murmurs even, were hushed. Throwing back his head, arching his chest, the notes of a song rose in the heavy air. Wild, strange notes they were, that struck vibrant chords in my own quivering being, and the song was the death-song. Ay, and the life-song of a soul which had come into the world even as mine own. And somewhere there lay in the song, half revealed, the awful mystery of that Creator Whom the soul leaped forth to meet: the myriad green of the sun playing with the leaves, the fish swimming lazily in the brown pool, the

doe grazing in the thicket, and a naked boy as free from care as these ; and still the life grows brighter as strength comes, and stature, and power over man and beast ; and then, God knows what memories of fierce love and fiercer wars and triumphs, of desires gained and enemies conquered, — God, who has made all lives akin to something which He holds in the hollow of His hand ; and then — the rain beating on the forest crown, beating, beating, beating.

The song ceased. The Indian knelt in the black mud, not at the feet of Fletcher Blount, but on the threshold of the Great Spirit who ruleth all things. The axe fell, yet he uttered no cry as he went before his Master.

So the four sang, each in turn, and died in the sight of some who pitied, and some who feared, and some who hated, for the sake of land and women. So the four went beyond the power of gold and gewgaw, and were dragged in the mire around the walls and flung into the yellow waters of the river.

Through the dreary afternoon the men lounged about and cursed the parley, and hearkened for the tattoo, — the signal agreed upon by the leaders to begin the fighting. There had been no command against taunts and jeers, and they gathered in groups under the walls to indulge themselves, and even tried to bribe me as I sat braced against a house with my drum between my knees and the sticks clutched tightly in my hands.

"Here's a Spanish dollar for a couple o' taps, Davy," shouted Jack Terrell.

"Come on, ye pack of Rebel cutthroats!" yelled a man on the wall.

He was answered by a torrent of imprecations. And so they flung it back and forth until nightfall, when out comes the same faded-scarlet officer, holding a letter in his hand, and marches down the street to Monsieur Bouton's. There would be no storming now, nor any man suffered to lay fingers on the Hair Buyer.

* * * * * * *

I remember, in particular, Hamilton the Hair Buyer. Not the fiend my imagination had depicted (I have since learned that most villains do not look the part), but a man with a great sorrow stamped upon his face. The sun rose on that 25th of February, and the mud melted, and one of our companies drew up on each side of the gate. Downward slid the lion of England, the garrison drums beat a dirge, and the Hair Buyer marched out at the head of his motley troops.

Then came my own greatest hour. All morning I had been polishing and tightening the drum, and my pride was so great as we fell into line that so much as a smile could not be got out of me. Picture it all: Vincennes in black and white by reason of the bright day; eaves and gables, stockade line and capped towers, sharply drawn, and straight above these a stark flagstaff waiting for our colors; pigs and fowls straying hither and thither, unmindful that this day is red on the calendar. Ah! here is a bit of color, too, — the villagers on the side streets to see the spectacle. Gay wools and gayer handkerchiefs there, amid the joyous, cheering crowd of thrice-changed nationality.

"*Vive les Bostonnais! Vive les Américains! Vive Monsieur le Colonel Clark! Vive le petit tambour!*"

"*Vive le petit tambour!*" That was the drummer boy, stepping proudly behind the Colonel himself, with a soul lifted high above mire and puddle into the blue above. There was laughter amongst the giants behind me, and Cowan saying softly, as when we left Kaskaskia, "Go it, Davy, my little gamecock!" And the whisper of it was repeated among the ranks drawn up by the gate.

Yes, here was the gate, and now we were in the fort, and an empire was gained, never to be lost again. The Stars and Stripes climbed the staff, and the folds were caught by an eager breeze. Thirteen cannon thundered from the blockhouses — one for each colony that had braved a king.

There, in the miry square within the Vincennes fort, thin and bronzed and travel-stained, were the men who

had dared the wilderness in ugliest mood. And yet none by himself would have done it — each had come here compelled by a spirit stronger than his own, by a master mind that laughed at the body and its ailments.

Colonel George Rogers Clark stood in the centre of the square, under the flag to whose renown he had added three stars. Straight he was, and square, and self-contained. No weakening tremor of exultation softened his face as he looked upon the men by whose endurance he had been able to do this thing. He waited until the white smoke of the last gun had drifted away on the breeze, until the snapping of the flag and the distant village sounds alone broke the stillness.

"We have not suffered all things for a reward," he said, "but because a righteous cause may grow. And though our names may be forgotten, our deeds will be remembered. We have conquered a vast land that our children and our children's children may be freed from tyranny, and we have brought a just vengeance upon our enemies. I thank you, one and all, in the name of the Continental Congress and of that Commonwealth of Virginia for which you have fought. You are no longer Virginians, Kentuckians, Kaskaskians, and Cahokians — you are Americans."

He paused, and we were silent. Though his words moved us strongly, they were beyond us.

"I mention no deeds of heroism, of unselfishness, of lives saved at the peril of others. But I am the debtor of every man here for the years to come to see that he and his family have justice from the Commonwealth and the nation."

Again he stopped, and it seemed to us watching that he smiled a little.

"I shall name one," he said, "one who never lagged, who never complained, who starved that the weak might be fed and walk. David Ritchie, come here."

I trembled, my teeth chattered as the water had never made them chatter. I believe I should have fallen but for Tom, who reached out from the ranks. I stumbled

forward in a daze to where the Colonel stood, and the cheering from the ranks was a thing beyond me. The Colonel's hand on my head brought me to my senses.

"David Ritchie," he said, "I give you publicly the thanks of the regiment. The parade is dismissed."

The next thing I knew I was on Cowan's shoulders, and he was tearing round and round the fort with two companies at his heels.

"The divil," said Terence McCann, "he dhrummed us over the wather, an' through the wather; and faix, he would have dhrummed the sculp from Hamilton's head and the Colonel had said the worrd."

"By gar!" cried Antoine *le Gris*, "now he drum us on to Detroit."

Out of the gate rushed Cowan, the frightened villagers scattering right and left. Antoine had a friend who lived in this street, and in ten minutes there was rum in the powder-horns, and the toast was "On to Detroit!"

Colonel Clark was sitting alone in the commanding officer's room of the garrison. And the afternoon sun, slanting through the square of the window, fell upon the maps and papers before him. He had sent for me. I halted in sheer embarrassment on the threshold, looked up at his face, and came on, troubled.

"Davy," he said, "do you want to go back to Kentucky?"

"I should like to stay to the end, Colonel," I answered.

"The end?" he said. "This is the end."

"And Detroit, sir?" I returned.

"Detroit!" he cried bitterly, "a man of sense measures his force, and does not try the impossible. I could as soon march against Philadelphia. This is the end, I say; and the general must give way to the politician. And may God have mercy on the politician who will try to keep a people's affection without money or help from Congress."

He fell back wearily in his chair, while I stood aston-

ished, wondering. I had thought to find him elated with victory.

"Congress or Virginia," said he, "will have to pay Monsieur Vigo, and Father Gibault, and Monsieur Gratiot, and the other good people who have trusted me. Do you think they will do so?"

"The Congress are far from here," I said.

"Ay," he answered, "too far to care about you and me, and what we have suffered."

He ended abruptly, and sat for a while staring out of the window at the figures crossing and recrossing the muddy parade-ground.

"Tom McChesney goes to-night to Kentucky with letters to the county lieutenant. You are to go with him, and then I shall have no one to remind me when I am hungry, and bring me hominy. I shall have no financier, no strategist for a tight place." He smiled a little, sadly, at my sorrowful look, and then drew me to him and patted my shoulder. "It is no place for a young lad,— an idle garrison. I think," he continued presently, "I think you have a future, David, if you do not lose your head. Kentucky will grow and conquer, and in twenty years be a thriving community. And presently you will go to Virginia, and study law, and come back again. Do you hear?"

"Yes, Colonel."

"And I would tell you one thing," said he, with force; "serve the people, as all true men should in a republic. But do not rely upon their gratitude. You will remember that?"

"Yes, Colonel."

A long time he paused, looking on me with a significance I did not then understand. And when he spoke again his voice showed no trace of emotion, save in the note of it.

"You have been a faithful friend, Davy, when I needed loyalty. Perhaps the time may come again. Promise me that you will not forget me if I am — unfortunate."

"Unfortunate, sir!" I exclaimed.

"Good-by, Davy," he said, "and God bless you. I have work to do."

Still I hesitated. He stared at me, but with kindness.

"What is it, Davy?" he asked.

"Please, sir," I said, "if I might take my drum?"

At that he laughed.

"You may," said he, "you may. Perchance we may need it again."

I went out from his presence, vaguely troubled, to find Tom. And before the early sun had set we were gliding down the Wabash in a canoe, past places forever dedicated to our agonies, towards Kentucky and Polly Ann.

"Davy," said Tom, "I reckon she'll be standin' under the 'simmon tree, waitin' fer us with the little shaver in her arms."

And so she was.

BOOK II

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

CHAPTER I

IN THE CABIN

THE Eden of one man may be the Inferno of his neighbor, and now I am to throw to the winds, like leaves of a worthless manuscript, some years of time, and introduce you to a new Kentucky, — a Kentucky that was not for the pioneer. One page of this manuscript might have told of a fearful winter, when the snow lay in great drifts in the bare woods, when Tom and I fashioned canoes or noggins out of the great roots, when a new and feminine bit of humanity cried in the bark cradle, and Polly Ann sewed deer leather. Another page — nay, a dozen — could be filled with Indian horrors, ambuscades and massacres. And also I might have told how there drifted into this land, hitherto unsoiled, the refuse cast off by the older colonies. I must add quickly that we got more than our share of their best stock along with this.

No sooner had the sun begun to pit the snow hillocks than wild creatures came in from the mountains, haggard with hunger and hardship. They had left their homes in Virginia and the Carolinas in the autumn ; an unheralded winter of Arctic fierceness had caught them in its grip. Bitter tales they told of wives and children buried among the rocks. Fast on the heels of these wretched ones trooped the spring settlers in droves ; and I have seen whole churches march singing into the forts, the preacher

leading, and thanking God loudly that He had delivered them from the wilderness and the savage. The little forts would not hold them; and they went out to hew clearings from the forest, and to build cabins and stockades. And our own people, starved and snowbound, went out likewise, — Tom and Polly Ann and their little family and myself to the farm at the river-side. And while the water flowed between the stumps over the black land, we planted and ploughed and prayed, always alert, watching north and south, against the coming of the Indians.

But Tom was no husbandman. He and his kind were the scouts, the advance guard of civilization, not tillers of the soil or lovers of close communities. Farther and farther they went afield for game, and always they grumbled sorely against this horde which had driven the deer from his cover and the buffalo from his wallow.

Looking back, I can recall one evening when the long summer twilight lingered to a close. Tom was lounging lazily against the big persimmon tree, smoking his pipe, the two children digging at the roots, and Polly Ann, seated on the door-log, sewing. As I drew near, she looked up at me from her work. She was a woman upon whose eternal freshness industry made no mar.

"Davy," she exclaimed, "how ye've growed! I thought ye'd be a wizened little body, but this year ye've shot up like a cornstalk."

"My father was six feet two inches in his moccasins," I said.

"He'll be wallopin' me soon," said Tom, with a grin. He took a long whiff at his pipe, and added thoughtfully, "I reckon this ain't no place fer me now, with all the settler folks and land-grabbers comin' through the Gap."

"Tom," said I, "there's a bit of a fall on the river here."

"Ay," he said, "and nary a fish left."

"Something better," I answered; "we'll put a dam there and a mill and a hominy pounder."

"And make our fortune grinding corn for the settlers," cried Polly Ann, showing a line of very white teeth. "I always said ye'd be a rich man, Davy."

Tom was mildly interested, and went with us at daylight to measure the fall. And he allowed that he would have the more time to hunt if the mill were a success. For a month I had had the scheme in my mind, where the dam was to be put, the race, and the wondrous wheel rimmed with cow horns to dip the water. And fixed on the wheel there was to be a crank that worked the pounder in the mortar. So we were to grind until I could arrange with Mr. Scarlett, the new storekeeper in Harrodstown, to have two grinding-stones fetched across the mountains.

While the corn ripened and the melons swelled and the flax flowered, our axes rang by the river's side; and sometimes, as we worked, Cowan and Terrell and McCann and other Long Hunters would come and jeer good-naturedly because we were turning civilized. Often they gave us a lift.

It was September when the millstones arrived, and I spent a joyous morning of final bargaining with Mr. Myron Scarlett. This Mr. Scarlett was from Connecticut, had been a quartermaster in the army, and at much risk brought ploughs and hardware, and scissors and buttons, and broadcloth and corduroy, across the Alleghanies, and down the Ohio in flatboats. These he sold at great profit. We had no money, not even the worthless scrip that Congress issued; but a beaver skin was worth eighteen shillings, a bearskin ten, and a fox or a deer or a wildcat less. Half the village watched the barter. The rest lounged sullenly about the land court.

The land court — curse of Kentucky! It was just a windowless log house built outside the walls, our temple of avarice. The case was this: Henderson (for whose company Daniel Boone cut the wilderness road) believed that he had bought the country, and issued grants therefor. Tom held one of these grants, alas, and many others whom I knew. Virginia repudiated Henderson. Keen-faced speculators bought acre upon acre and tract upon tract from the State, and crossed the mountains to extort. Claims conflicted, titles lapped. There was the court set in the sunlight in the midst of a fair land, held by the

shameless, thronged day after day by the homeless and the needy, jostling, quarrelling, beseeching. Even as I looked upon this strife a man stood beside me.

"Drat 'em," said the stranger, as he watched a hawk-eyed extortioner in drab, for these did not condescend to hunting shirts, "drat 'em, ef I had my way I'd wring the neck of every mother's son of 'em."

I turned with a start, and there was Mr. Daniel Boone.

"Howdy, Davy," he said; "ye've growed some sence ye've ben with Clark." He paused, and then continued in the same strain: "'Tis the same at Boonesboro and up thar at the Falls settlement. The critters is everywhar, robbin' men of their claims. Davy," said Mr. Boone, earnestly, "you know that I come into Kaintuckee when it waren't nothin' but wilderness, and resked my life time and again. Them varmints is wuss'n redskins, — they've robbed me already of half my claims."

"Robbed you!" I exclaimed, indignant that he, of all men, should suffer.

"Ay," he said, "robbed me. They've took one claim after another, tracts that I staked out long afore they heerd of Kaintuckee." He rubbed his rifle barrel with his buckskin sleeve. "I get a little for my skins, and a little by surveyin'. But when the game goes I reckon I'll go after it."

"Where, Mr. Boone?" I asked.

"Whar? whar the varmints cyant foller. Acrost the Mississippi into the Spanish wilderness."

"And leave Kentucky?" I cried.

"Davy," he answered sadly, "you kin cope with 'em. They tell me you're buildin' a mill up at McChesney's, and I reckon you're as cute as any of 'em. They beat me. I'm good for nothin' but shootin' and explorin'."

We stood silent for a while, our attention caught by a quarrel which had suddenly come out of the doorway. One of the men was Jim Willis, — my friend of Clark's campaign, — who had a Henderson claim near Shawanee Springs. The other was the hawk-eyed man of whom Mr. Boone had spoken, and fragments of their curses

reached us where we stood. The hunting shirts surged around them, alert now at the prospect of a fight; men came running in from all directions, and shouts of "Hang him! Tomahawk him!" were heard on every side. Mr. Boone did not move. It was a common enough spectacle for him, and he was not excitable. Moreover, he knew that the death of one extortioner more or less would have no effect on the system. They had become as the fowls of the air.

"I was acrost the mountain last month," said Mr. Boone, presently, "and one of them skunks had stole Campbell's silver spoons at Abingdon. Campbell was out arter him for a week with a coil of rope on his saddle. But the varmint got to cover."

Mr. Boone wished me luck in my new enterprise, bade me good-by, and set out for Redstone, where he was to measure a tract for a Revolutioner. The speculator having been rescued from Jim Willis's clutches by the sheriff, the crowd good-naturedly helped us load our stones between pack-horses, and some of them followed us all the way home that they might see the grinding. Half of McAfee's new station had heard the news, and came over likewise. And from that day we ground as much corn as could be brought to us from miles around.

Polly Ann and I ran the mill and kept the accounts. Often of a crisp autumn morning we heard a gobble-gobble above the tumbling of the water and found a wild turkey perched on top of the hopper, eating his fill. Some of our meat we got that way. As for Tom, he was off and on. When the roving spirit seized him he made journeys to the westward with Cowan and Ray. Generally they returned with packs of skins. But sometimes soberly, thanking Heaven that their hair was left growing on their heads. This, and patrolling the Wilderness Road and other militia duties, made up Tom's life. No sooner was the mill fairly started than off he went to the Cumberland. I mention this, not alone because I remember well the day of his return, but because of a certain happening then that had a heavy influence on my after life.

The episode deals with an easy-mannered gentleman named Potts, who was the agent for a certain Major Colfax of Virginia. Tom owned under a Henderson grant; the Major had been given this and other lands for his services in the war. Mr. Potts arrived one rainy afternoon and found me standing alone under the little lean-to that covered the hopper. How we served him, with the aid of McCann and Cowan and other neighbors, and how we were near getting into trouble because of the prank, will be seen later. The next morning I rode into Harrodstown not wholly easy in my mind concerning the wisdom of the thing I had done. There was no one to advise me, for Colonel Clark was far away, building a fort on the banks of the Mississippi. Tom had laughed at the consequences; he cared little about his land, and was for moving into the Wilderness again. But for Polly Ann's sake I wished that we had treated the land agent less cavalierly. I was soon distracted from these thoughts by the sight of Harrodstown itself.

I had no sooner ridden out of the forest shade when I saw that the place was in an uproar, men and women gathering in groups and running here and there between the cabins. Urging on the mare, I cantered across the fields, and the first person I met was James Ray.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Matter enough! An army of redskins has crossed the Ohio, and not a man to take command. My God," cried Ray, pointing angrily at the swarms about the land office, "what trash we have got this last year! Kentucky can go to the devil, half the stations be wiped out, and not a thrip do they care."

"Have you sent word to the Colonel?" I asked.

"If he was here," said Ray, bitterly, "he'd have half of 'em swinging inside of an hour. I'll warrant he'd send 'em to the right-about."

I rode on into the town, Potts gone out of my mind. Apart from the land-office crowds, and looking on in silent rage, stood a group of the old settlers, — tall, lean, powerful, yet impotent for lack of a leader. A contrast

they were, these buckskin-clad pioneers, to the ill-assorted humanity they watched, absorbed in struggles for the very lands they had won.

"By the etarnal!" said Jack Terrell, "if the yea'th was ter swaller 'em up, they'd keep on a-dickerin' in hell."

"Something's got to be done," Captain Harrod put in gloomily; "the red varmints 'll be on us in another day. In God's name, whar is Clark?"

"Hold!" cried Fletcher Blount, "what's that?"

The broiling about the land court, too, was suddenly hushed. Men stopped in their tracks, staring fixedly at three forms which had come out of the woods into the clearing.

"Redskins, or there's no devil!" said Terrell.

Redskins they were, but not the blanketed kind that drifted every day through the station. Their war-paint gleamed in the light, and the white edges of the feathered head-dresses caught the sun. One held up in his right hand a white belt, — token of peace on the frontier.

"Lord A'mighty!" said Fletcher Blount, "be they Cricks?"

"Chickasaws, by the headgear," said Terrell. "Davy, you've got a hoss. Ride out and look 'em over."

Nothing loath, I put the mare into a gallop, and I passed over the very place where Polly Ann had picked me up and saved my life long since. The Indians came on at a dog trot, but when they were within fifty paces of me they halted abruptly. The chief waved the white belt around his head.

"Davy!" says he, and I trembled from head to foot. How well I knew that voice!

"Colonel Clark!" I cried, and rode up to him. "Thank God you are come, sir," said I, "for the people here are land-mad, and the Northern Indians are crossing the Ohio."

He took my bridle, and, leading the horse, began to walk rapidly towards the station.

"Ay," he answered, "I know it. A runner came to

me with the tidings, where I was building a fort on the Mississippi, and I took Willis here and Saunders, and came."

I glanced at my old friends, who grinned at me through the berry-stain on their faces. We reached a ditch through which the rain of the night before was draining from the fields. Clark dropped the bridle, stooped down, and rubbed his face clean. Up he got again and flung the feathers from his head, and I thought that his eyes twinkled despite the sternness of his look.

"Davy, my lad," said he, "you and I have seen some strange things together. Perchance we shall see stranger to-day."

A shout went up, for he had been recognized. And Captain Harrod and Ray and Terrell and Cowan (who had just ridden in) ran up to greet him and press his hand. He called them each by name, these men whose loyalty had been proved, but said no word more nor paused in his stride until he had reached the edge of the mob about the land court. There he stood for a full minute, and we who knew him looked on silently and waited.

The turmoil had begun again, the speculators calling out in strident tones, the settlers bargaining and pushing, and all clamoring to be heard. While there was money to be made or land to be got they had no ear for the public weal. A man shouldered his way through, roughly, and they gave back, cursing, surprised. He reached the door, and, flinging those who blocked it right and left, entered. There he was recognized, and his name flew from mouth to mouth.

"Clark!"

He walked up to the table, strewn with books and deeds.

"Silence!" he thundered. But there was no need, — they were still for once. "This court is closed," he cried, "while Kentucky is in danger. Not a deed shall be signed nor an acre granted until I come back from the Ohio. Out you go!"

Out they went indeed, judge, brokers, speculators —

the evicted and the triumphant together. And when the place was empty Clark turned the key and thrust it into his hunting shirt. He stood for a moment on the step, and his eyes swept the crowd.

"Now," he said, "there have been many to claim this land — who will follow me to defend it?"

As I live, they cheered him. Hands were flung up that were past counting, and men who were barely rested from the hardships of the Wilderness Trail shouted their readiness to go. But others slunk away, and were found that morning grumbling and cursing the chance that had brought them to Kentucky. Within the hour the news had spread to the farms, and men rode in to Harrodstown to tell the Colonel of many who were leaving the plough in the furrow and the axe in the wood, and starting off across the mountains in anger and fear. The Colonel turned to me as he sat writing down the names of the volunteers.

"Davy," said he, "when you are grown you shall not stay at home, I promise you. Take your mare and ride as for your life to McChesney, and tell him to choose ten men and go to the Crab Orchard on the Wilderness Road. Tell him for me to turn back every man, woman, and child who tries to leave Kentucky."

I met Tom coming in from the field with his rawhide harness over his shoulders. Polly Ann stood calling him in the door, and the squirrel broth was steaming on the table. He did not wait for it. Kissing her, he flung himself into the saddle I had left, and we watched him mutely as he waved back to us from the edge of the woods.

* * * * * * *

In the night I found myself sitting up in bed, listening to a running and stamping near the cabin.

Polly Ann was stirring. "Davy," she whispered, "the stock is oneasy."

We peered out of the loophole together and through the little orchard we had planted. The moon flooded the fields, and beyond it the forest was a dark blur. I can recall the scene now, the rude mill standing by the water-

side, the twisted rail fences, and the black silhouettes of the horses and cattle as they stood bunched together. Behind us little Tom stirred in his sleep and startled us. That very evening Polly Ann had frightened him into obedience by telling him that the Shawanees would get him.

What was there to do? McAfee's Station was four miles away, and Ray's clearing two. Ray was gone with Tom. I could not leave Polly Ann alone. There was nothing for it but to wait.

Silently, that the children might not be waked and a lurking savage might not hear, we put the powder and bullets in the middle of the room and loaded the guns and pistols. For Polly Ann had learned to shoot. She took the loopholes of two sides of the cabin, I of the other two, and then began the fearful watching and waiting which the frontier knows so well. Suddenly the cattle stirred again, and stampeded to the other corner of the field. There came a whisper from Polly Ann.

"What is it?" I answered, running over to her.

"Look out," she said; "what d'ye see near the mill?"

Her sharp eyes had not deceived her, for mine perceived plainly a dark form skulking in the hickory grove. Next, a movement behind the rail fence, and darting back to my side of the house I made out a long black body wriggling at the edge of the withered corn-patch. They were surrounding us. How I wished that Tom were home!

A stealthy sound began to intrude itself upon our ears. Listening intently, I thought it came from the side of the cabin where the lean-to was, where we stored our wood in winter. The black shadow fell on that side, and into a patch of bushes; peering out of the loophole, I could perceive nothing there. The noise went on at intervals. All at once there grew on me, with horror, the discovery that there was digging under the cabin.

How long the sound continued I know not, — it might have been an hour, it might have been less. Now I thought I heard it under the wall, now beneath the puncheons of the floor. The pitchy blackness within

was such that we could not see the boards moving, and therefore we must needs kneel down and feel them from time to time. Yes, this one was lifting from its bed on the hard earth beneath. I was sure of it. It rose an inch — then an inch more. Gripping the handle of my tomahawk, I prayed for guidance in my stroke, for the blade might go wild in the darkness. Upward crept the board, and suddenly it was gone from the floor. I swung a full circle — and to my horror I felt the axe plunging into soft flesh and crunching on a bone. I had missed the head! A yell shattered the night, the puncheon fell with a rattle on the boards, and my tomahawk was gone from my hand. Without, the fierce war-cry of the Shawanees that I knew so well echoed around the log walls, and the door trembled with a blow. The children awoke, crying.

There was no time to think; my great fear was that the devil in the cabin would kill Polly Ann. Just then I heard her calling out to me.

"Hide!" I cried, "hide under the shake-down! Has he got you?"

I heard her answer, and then the sound of a scuffle that maddened me. Knife in hand, I crept slowly about, and put my fingers on a man's neck and side. Next Polly Ann careened against me, and I lost him again. "Davy, Davy," I heard her gasp, "look out fer the floor!"

It was too late. The puncheon rose under me, I stumbled, and it fell again. Once more the awful changing notes of the war-whoop sounded without. A body bumped on the boards, a white light rose before my eyes, and a sharp pain leaped in my side. Then all was black again, but I had my senses still, and my fingers closed around the knotted muscles of an arm. I thrust the pistol in my hand against flesh, and fired. Two of us fell together, but the thought of Polly Ann got me staggering to my feet again, calling her name. By the grace of God I heard her answer.

"Are ye hurt, Davy?"

"No," said I, "no. And you?"

We drifted together. 'Twas she who had the presence of mind.

"The chest — quick, the chest!"

We stumbled over a body in reaching it. We seized the handles, and with all our strength hauled it athwart the loose puncheon that seemed to be lifting even then. A mighty splintering shook the door.

"To the ports!" cried Polly Ann, as our heads knocked together.

To find the rifles and prime them seemed to take an age. Next I was staring through the loophole along a barrel, and beyond it were three black forms in line on a long beam. I think we fired — Polly Ann and I — at the same time. One fell. We saw a comedy of the beam dropping heavily on the foot of another, and he limping off with a guttural howl of rage and pain. I fired a pistol at him, but missed him, and then I was ramming a powder charge down the long barrel of the rifle. Suddenly there was silence, — even the children had ceased crying. Outside, in the dooryard, a feathered figure writhed like a snake towards the fence. The moon still etched the picture in black and white.

Shots awoke me, I think, distant shots. And they sounded like the ripping and tearing of cloth for a wound. 'Twas no new sound to me.

"Davy, dear," said a voice, tenderly.

Out of the mist the tear-stained face of Polly Ann bent over me. I put up my hand, and dropped it again with a cry. Then, my senses coming with a rush, the familiar objects of the cabin outlined themselves: Tom's winter hunting shirt, Polly Ann's woollen shift and sunbonnet on their pegs; the big stone chimney, the ladder to the loft; the closed door, with a long, jagged line across it where the wood was splintered; and, dearest of all, the chubby forms of Peggy and little Tom playing on the trundle-bed. Then my glance wandered to the floor, and on the puncheons were three stains. I closed my eyes.

Again came a far-off rattle, like stones falling from a great height down a rocky bluff.

"What's that?" I whispered.

"They're fighting at McAfee's Station," said Polly Ann. She put her cool hand on my head, and little Tom climbed up on the bed and looked up into my face, wistfully calling my name.

"Oh, Davy," said his mother, "I thought ye were never coming back."

"And the redskins?" I asked.

She drew the child away, lest he hurt me, and shuddered.

"I reckon 'twas only a war-party," she answered. "The rest is at McAfee's. And if they beat 'em off —" she stopped abruptly.

"We shall be saved," I said.

I shall never forget that day. Polly Ann left my side only to feed the children and to keep watch out of the loopholes, and I lay on my back, listening and listening to the shots. At last these became scattered. Then, though we strained our ears, we heard them no more. Was the fort taken? The sun slid across the heavens and shot narrow blades of light, now through one loophole and now through another, until a ray slanted from the western wall and rested upon the red-and-black paint of two dead bodies in the corner. I stared with horror.

"I was afeard to open the door and throw 'em out," said Polly Ann, apologetically.

Still I stared. One of them had a great cleft across his face.

"But I thought I hit him in the shoulder," I exclaimed.

Polly Ann thrust her hand, gently, across my eyes. "Davy, ye mustn't talk," she said; "that's a dear."

Drowsiness seized me. But I resisted.

"You killed him, Polly Ann," I murmured, "you?"

"Hush," said Polly Ann.

And I slept again.

CHAPTER II

"THE BEGGARS ARE COME TO TOWN"

"THEY was that destitute," said Tom, "'twas a pity to see 'em."

"And they be grand folks, ye say?" said Polly Ann.

"Grand folks, I reckon. And helpless as babes on the Wilderness Trail. They had two niggers — his nigger an' hers — and they was tuckered, too, fer a fact."

"Lawsy!" exclaimed Polly Ann. "Be still, honey!" Taking a piece of corn-pone from the cupboard, she bent over and thrust it between little Peggy's chubby fingers. "Be still, honey, and listen to what your Pa says. Whar did ye find 'em, Tom?"

"'Twas Jim Ray found 'em," said Tom. "We went up to Crab Orchard, accordin' to the Colonel's orders, and we was thar three days. Ye ought to hev seen the trash we turned back, Polly Ann! Most of 'em was scared plum' crazy, and they was fer gittin 'out 'n Kaintuckee at any cost. Some was fer fightin' their way through us."

"The skulks!" exclaimed Polly Ann. "They tried to kill ye? What did ye do?"

Tom grinned, his mouth full of bacon.

"Do?" says he; "we shot a couple of 'em in the legs and arms, and bound 'em up again. They was in a t'arin' rage. I'm more afeard of a scar't man, — a real scar't man — nor a rattler. They cussed us till they was hoarse. Said they'd hev us hung, an' Clark, too.

Said they hed a right to go back to Virginny if they hed a mind."

"An' what did ye say?" demanded Polly Ann, pausing in her work, her eyes flashing with resentment. "Did ye tell 'em they was cowards to want to settle lands, and not fight for 'em? Other folks' lands, too."

"We didn't tell 'em nothin'," said Tom; "jest sent 'em kitin' back to the stations whar they come from."

"I reckon they won't go foolin' with Clark's boys again," said Polly Ann, resuming a vigorous rubbing of the skillet. "Ye was tellin' me about these fine folks ye fetched home." She tossed her head in the direction of the open door, and I wondered if the fine folks were outside.

"Oh, ay," said Tom; "they was comin' this way, from the Carolinys. Jim Ray went out to look for a deer, and found 'em off 'n the trail. By the etarnal, they *was* tuckered. *He* was the wust, Jim said, lyin' down on a bed of laurels she and the niggers made. She has sperrit, that woman. Jim fed him, and he got up. She wouldn't eat nothin', and made Jim put him on his hoss. She walked. I can't mek out why them aristocrats wants to come to Kaintuckee. They're a sight too tender."

"Pore things!" said Polly Ann, compassionately. "So ye fetched 'em home."

"They hadn't a place ter go," said he, "and I reckoned 'twould give 'em time ter ketch breath, an' turn around. I told 'em livin' in Kaintuck was kinder rough."

"Mercy!" said Polly Ann, "ter think that they was use' ter silver spoons, and linen, and niggers ter wait on 'em. Tom, ye must shoot a turkey, and I'll do my best to give 'em a good supper." Tom rose obediently, and seized his coonskin hat. She stopped him with a word. "Tom."

"Ay?"

"Mayhap — mayhap Davy would know 'em. He's been to Charlestown with the gentry there."

"Mayhap," agreed Tom. "Pore little deevil," said he, "he's hed a hard time."

"He'll be right again soon," said Polly Ann. "He's

been sleepin' that way, off and on, fer a week." Her voice faltered into a note of tenderness as her eyes rested on me.

"I reckon we owe Davy a heap, Polly Ann," said he.

I was about to interrupt, but Polly Ann's next remark arrested me.

"Tom," said she, "he oughter be eddicated."

"Eddicated!" exclaimed Tom, with a kind of dismay.

"Yes, eddicated," she repeated. "He ain't like you and me. He's different. He oughter be a lawyer, or somethin'."

Tom reflected.

"Ay," he answered, "the Colonel says that same thing. He oughter be sent over the mountain to git l'arnin'."

"And we'll be missing him sore," said Polly Ann, with a sigh.

I wanted to speak then, but the words would not come.

"Whar hev they gone?" said Tom.

"To take a walk," said Polly Ann, and laughed. "The gentry has sech fancies as that. Tom, I reckon I'll fly over to Mrs. McCann's an' beg some of that prime bacon she has."

Tom picked up his rifle, and they went out together. I lay for a long time reflecting. To the strange guests whom Tom in the kindness of his heart had brought back and befriended I gave little attention. I was overwhelmed by the love which had just been revealed to me. And so I was to be educated. It had been in my mind these many years, but I had never spoken of it to Polly Ann. Dear Polly Ann! My eyes filled at the thought that she herself had determined upon this sacrifice.

There were footsteps at the door, and these I heard, and heeded not. Then there came a voice, — a woman's voice, modulated and trained in the perfections of speech and in the art of treating things lightly. At the sound of that voice I caught my breath.

"What a pastoral! Harry, if we have sought for virtue in the wilderness, we have found it."

"When have we ever sought for virtue, Sarah?"

It was the man who answered and stirred another chord of my memory.

"When, indeed!" said the woman; "'tis a luxury that is denied us, I fear me."

"Egad, we have run the gamut, all but that."

I thought the woman sighed.

"Our hosts are gone out," she said, "bless their simple souls! 'Tis Arcady, Harry, 'where thieves do not break in and steal.' That's Biblical, isn't it?" She paused, and joined in the man's laugh. "I remember—" She stopped abruptly.

"Thieves!" said he, "not in our sense. And yet a fortnight ago this sylvan retreat was the scene of murder and sudden death."

"Yes, Indians," said the woman; "but they are beaten off and forgotten. Troubles do not last here. Did you see the boy? He's in there, in the corner, getting well of a fearful hacking. Mrs. McChesney says he saved her and her brats."

"Ay, McChesney told me," said the man. "Let's have a peep at him."

In they came, and I looked on the woman, and would have leaped from my bed had the strength been in me. Superb she was, though her close-fitting travelling gown of green cloth was frayed and torn by the briers, and the beauty of her face enhanced by the marks of I know not what trials and emotions. Little, dark-pencilled lines under the eyes were nigh robbing these of the haughtiness I had once seen and hated. Set high on her hair was a curving, green hat with a feather, ill-suited to the wilderness.

I looked on the man. He was as ill-equipped as she. A London tailor must have cut his suit of gray. A single band of linen, soiled by the journey, was wound about his throat, and I remember oddly the buttons stuck on his knees and cuffs, and these silk-embroidered in a criss-cross pattern of lighter gray. Some had been torn off. As for

his face, 'twas as handsome as ever, for dissipation sat well upon it.

My thoughts flew back to that day long gone when a friendless boy rode up a long drive to a pillared mansion. I saw again the picture. The horse with the craning neck, the liveried servant at the bridle, the listless young gentleman with the shiny boots reclining on the horse-block, and above him, under the portico, the grand lady whose laugh had made me sad. And I remembered, too, the wild, neglected lad who had been to me as a brother, warm-hearted and generous, who had shared what he had with a foundling, who had wept with me in my first great sorrow. Where was he?

For I was face to face once more with Mrs. Temple and Mr. Harry Riddle!

The lady started as she gazed at me, and her tired eyes widened. She clutched Mr. Riddle's arm.

"Harry!" she cried, "Harry, he puts me in mind of — of some one — I cannot think."

Mr. Riddle laughed nervously.

"There, there, Sally," says he, "all brats resemble somebody. I have heard you say so a dozen times."

She turned upon him an appealing glance.

"Oh!" she said, with a little catch of her breath, "is there no such thing as oblivion? Is there a place in the world that is not haunted? I am cursed with memory."

"Or the lack of it," answered Mr. Riddle, pulling out a silver snuff-box from his pocket and staring at it ruefully. "Damme, the snuff I fetched from Paris is gone, all but a pinch. Here is a real tragedy."

"It was the same in Rome," the lady continued, unheeding, "when we met the Izards, and at Venice that nasty Colonel Tarleton saw us at the opera. In London we must needs run into the Manners from Maryland. In Paris —"

"In Paris we were safe enough," Mr. Riddle threw in hastily.

"And why?" she flashed back at him.

He did not answer that.

"A truce with your fancies, madam," said he. "Behold a soul of good nature! I have followed you through half the civilized countries of the globe — none of them are good enough. You must needs cross the ocean again, and come to the wilds. We nearly die on the trail, are picked up by a Samaritan in buckskin and taken into the bosom of his worthy family. And forsooth, you look at a backwoods urchin, and are nigh to swooning."

"Hush, Harry," she cried, starting forward and peering into my face; "he will hear you."

"Tut!" said Harry, "what if he does? London and Paris are words to him. We might as well be speaking French. And I'll take my oath he's sleeping."

The corner where I lay was dark, for the cabin had no windows. And if my life had depended upon speaking, I could have found no fit words then.

She turned from me, and her mood changed swiftly. For she laughed lightly, musically, and put a hand on his shoulder.

"Perchance I am ghost-ridden," she said.

"They are not ghosts of a past happiness, at all events," he answered.

She sat down on a stool before the hearth, and clasping her fingers upon her knee looked thoughtfully into the embers of the fire. Presently she began to speak in a low, even voice, he looking down at her, his feet apart, his hand thrust backward towards the heat.

"Harry," she said, "do you remember all our contrivances? How you used to hold my hand in the garden under the table, while I talked brazenly to Mr. Mason? And how jealous Jack Temple used to get?" She laughed again, softly, always looking at the fire.

"Damnably jealous!" agreed Mr. Riddle, and yawned. "Served him devilish right for marrying you. And he was a blind fool for five long years."

"Yes, blind," the lady agreed. "How could he have been so blind? How well I recall the day he rode after us in the woods."

"'Twas the parson told, curse him!" said Mr. Riddle.

"We should have gone that night, if your courage had held."

"My courage!" she cried, flashing a look upwards, "my foresight. A pretty mess we had made of it without my inheritance. 'Tis small enough, the Lord knows. In Europe we should have been dregs. We should have starved in the wilderness with you a-farming."

He looked down at her curiously.

"Devilish queer talk," said he, "but while we are in it, I wonder where Temple is now. He got aboard the King's frigate with a price on his head. Williams told me he saw him in London, at White's. Have — have you ever heard, Sarah?"

She shook her head, her glance returning to the ashes.

"No," she answered.

"Faith," says Mr. Riddle, "he'll scarce turn up here."

She did not answer that, but sat motionless.

"He'll scarce turn up here, in these wilds," Mr. Riddle repeated, "and what I am wondering, Sarah, is how the devil we are to live here."

"How do these good people live, who helped us when we were starving?"

Mr. Riddle flung his hand eloquently around the cabin. There was something of disgust in the gesture.

"You see!" he said, "love in a cottage."

"But it is love," said the lady, in a low tone.

He broke into laughter.

"Sally," he cried, "I have visions of you gracing the board at which we sat to-day, patting journey-cakes on the hearth, stewing squirrel broth with the same pride that you once planned a rout. Cleaning the pots and pans, and standing anxious at the doorway staring through a sunbonnet for your lord and master."

"My lord and master!" said the lady, and there was so much of scorn in the words that Mr. Riddle winced.

"Come," he said, "I grant now that you could make pans shine like pier-glasses, that you could cook bacon to a turn — although I would have laid an hundred guineas against it some years ago. What then? Are you to be

contented with four log walls? With the intellectual companionship of the McChesneys and their friends? Are you to depend for excitement upon the chances of having the hair neatly cut from your head by red fiends? Come, we'll go back to the *Rue St. Dominique*, to the suppers and the card parties of the countess. We'll be rid of regrets for a life upon which we have turned our backs forever."

She shook her head, sadly.

"It's no use, Harry," said she, "we'll never be rid of regrets."

"We'll never have a barony like Temple Bow, and races every week, and gentry round about. But, damn it, the Rebels have spoiled all that since the war."

"Those are not the regrets I mean," answered Mrs. Temple.

"What then, in Heaven's name?" he cried. "You were not wont to be thus. But now I vow you go beyond me. What then?"

She did not answer, but sat leaning forward over the hearth, he staring at her in angry perplexity. A sound broke the afternoon stillness, — the pattering of small, bare feet on the puncheons. A tremor shook the woman's shoulders, and little Tom stood before her, a quaint figure in a butternut smock, his blue eyes questioning. He laid a hand on her arm.

Then a strange thing happened. With a sudden impulse she turned and flung her arms about the boy and strained him to her, and kissed his brown hair. He struggled, but when she released him he sat very still on her knee, looking into her face. For he was a solemn child. The lady smiled at him, and there were two splashes like raindrops on her fair cheeks.

As for Mr. Riddle, he went to the door, looked out, and took a last pinch of snuff.

"Here is the mistress of the house coming back," he cried, "and singing like the shepherdess in the opera."

It was Polly Ann indeed. At the sound of his mother's voice, little Tom jumped down from the lady's lap and

ran past Mr. Riddle at the door. Mrs. Temple's thoughts were gone across the mountains.

"And what is that you have under your arm?" said Mr. Riddle, as he gave back.

"I've fetched some prime bacon fer your supper, sir," said Polly Ann, all rosy from her walk; "what I have ain't fit to give ye."

Mrs. Temple rose.

"My dear," she said, "what you have is too good for us. And if you do such a thing again, I shall be very angry."

"Lord, ma'am," exclaimed Polly Ann, "and you use' ter dainties an' silver an' linen! Tom is gone to try to git a turkey for ye." She paused, and looked compassionately at the lady. "Bless ye, ma'am, ye're that tuckered from the mountains! 'Tis a fearsome journey."

"Yes," said the lady, simply, "I am tired."

"Small wonder!" exclaimed Polly Ann. "To think what ye've been through — yere husband near to dyin' afore yere eyes, and ye a-reskin' yere own life to save him — so Tom tells me. When Tom goes out a-fightin' redskins I'm that fidgety I can't set still. I wouldn't let him know what I feel fer the world. But well ye know the pain of it, who love yere husband like that."

The lady would have smiled bravely, had the strength been given her. She tried. And then, with a shudder, she hid her face in her hands.

"Oh, don't!" she exclaimed, "don't!"

Mr. Riddle went out.

"There, there, ma'am," she said, "I hedn't no right ter speak, and ye fair worn out." She drew her gently into a chair. "Set down, ma'am, and don't ye stir tell supper's ready." She brushed her eyes with her sleeve, and, stepping briskly to my bed, bent over me. "Davy," she said, "Davy, how be ye?"

"Davy!"

It was the lady's voice. She stood facing us, and never while I live shall I forget that which I saw in her eyes. Some resemblance it bore to the look of the hunted deer,

but in the animal it is dumb, appealing. Understanding made the look of the woman terrible to behold, — understanding, ay, and courage. For she did not lack this last quality. Polly Ann gave back in a kind of dismay, and I shivered.

"Yes," I answered, "I am David Ritchie."

"You — you dare to judge me!" she cried.

I knew not why she said this.

"To judge you?" I repeated.

"Yes, to judge me," she answered. "I know you, David Ritchie, and the blood that runs in you. Your mother was a foolish — saint" (she laughed), "who lifted her eyebrows when I married her brother, John Temple. That was her condemnation of me, and it stung me more than had a thousand sermons. A doting saint, because she followed your father into the mountain wilds to her death for a whim of his. And your father! A Calvinist fanatic who had no mercy on sin, save for that particular weakness of his own — "

"Stop, Mrs. Temple!" I cried, lifting up in bed. And to my astonishment she was silenced, looking at me in amazement. "You had your vengeance when I came to you, when you turned from me with a lift of your shoulders at the news of my father's death. And now —"

"And now?" she repeated questioningly.

"Now I thought you were changed," I said slowly, for the excitement was telling on me.

"You listened!" she said.

"I pitied you."

"Oh, pity!" she cried. "My God, that you should pity me!" She straightened, and summoned all the spirit that was in her. "I would rather be called a name than have the pity of you and yours."

"You cannot change it, Mrs. Temple," I answered, and fell back on the nettle-bark sheets. "You cannot change it," I heard myself repeating, as though it were another's voice. And I knew that Polly Ann was bending over me and calling me.

* * * * * * *

"Where did they go, Polly Ann?" I asked.

"Acrost the Mississippi, to the lands of the Spanish King," said Polly Ann.

"And where in those dominions?" I demanded.

"John Saunders took 'em as far as the Falls," Polly Ann answered. "He 'lowed they was goin' to St. Louis. But they never said a word. I reckon they'll be hunted as long as they live."

I had thought of them much as I lay on my back recovering from the fever, — the fever for which Mrs. Temple was to blame. Yet I bore her no malice. And many other thoughts I had, probing back into childhood memories for the solving of problems there.

"I knowed ye come of gentlefolks, Davy," Polly Ann had said when we talked together.

So I was first cousin to Nick, and nephew to that selfish gentleman, Mr. Temple, in whose affectionate care I had been left in Charlestown by my father. And my father? Who had he been? I remembered the speech that he had used and taught me, and how his neighbors had dubbed him "aristocrat." But Mrs. Temple was gone, and it was not in likelihood that I should ever see her more.

CHAPTER III

WE GO TO DANVILLE

Two years went by, two uneventful years for me, two mighty years for Kentucky. Westward rolled the tide of emigrants to change her character, but to swell her power. Towns and settlements sprang up in a season and flourished, and a man could scarce keep pace with the growth of them. Doctors came, and ministers, and lawyers; generals and majors, and captains and subalterns of the Revolution, to till their grants and to found families. There were gentry, too, from the tide-waters, come to retrieve the fortunes which they had lost by their patriotism. There were storekeepers like Mr. Scarlett, adventurers and ne'er-do-weels who hoped to start with a clean slate, and a host of lazy vagrants who thought to scratch the soil and find abundance.

I must not forget how, at the age of seventeen, I became a landowner, thanks to my name being on the roll of Colonel Clark's regiment. For, in a spirit of munificence, the Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia had awarded to every private in that regiment one hundred and eight acres of land on the Ohio River, north of the Falls. Sergeant Thomas McChesney, as a reward for his services in one of the severest campaigns in history, received a grant of two hundred and sixteen acres! You who will may look at the plat made by William Clark, Surveyor for the Board of Commissioners, and find sixteen acres marked for Thomas McChesney in Section 169, and two hundred more in Section 3. Section 3 fronted the Ohio some distance above Bear Grass Creek, and was, of course,

on the Illinois shore. As for my own plots, some miles in the interior, I never saw them. But I own them to this day.

I mention these things as bearing on the story of my life, with which I must get on. And, therefore, I may not dwell upon this injustice to the men who won an empire and were flung a bone long afterwards.

It was early autumn once more, and such a busy week we had had at the mill, that Tom was perforce obliged to remain at home and help, though he longed to be gone with Cowan and Ray a-hunting to the southwest. Up rides a man named Jarrott, flings himself from his horse, passes the time of day as he watches the grinding, helps Tom to tie up a sack or two, and hands him a paper.

"What's this?" says Tom, staring at it blankly.

"Ye won't blame me, Mac," answers Mr. Jarrott, somewhat ashamed of his rôle of process-server. "'Tain't none of my doin's."

"Read it, Davy," said Tom, giving it to me.

I stopped the mill, and, unfolding the paper, read. I remember not the quaint wording of it, save that it was ill-spelled and ill-writ generally. In short, it was a summons for Tom to appear before the court at Danville on a certain day in the following week, and I made out that a Mr. Neville Colfax was the plaintiff in the matter, and that the suit had to do with land.

"Neville Colfax!" I exclaimed, "that's the man for whom Mr. Potts was agent."

"Ay, ay," said Tom, and sat him down on the meal-bags. "Drat the varmint, he kin hev the land."

"Hev the land?" cried Polly Ann, who had come in upon us. "Hev ye no sperrit, Tom McChesney?"

"There's no chance ag'in the law," said Tom, hopelessly. "Thar's Perkins had his land tuck away last year, and Terrell's moved out, and twenty more I could name. And thar's Dan'l Boone, himself. Most the rich bottom he tuck up the critters hev got away from him."

"Ye'll go to Danville and take Davy with ye and fight

it," answered Polly Ann, decidedly. "Davy has a word to say, I reckon. 'Twas he made the mill and scar't that Mr. Potts away. I reckon he'll git us out of this fix."

Mr. Jarrott applauded her courage.

"Ye have the grit, ma'am," he said, as he mounted his horse again. "Here's luck to ye!"

The remembrance of Mr. Potts weighed heavily upon my mind during the next week. Perchance Tom would have to pay for this prank likewise. 'Twas indeed a foolish, childish thing to have done, and I might have known that it would only have put off the evil day of reckoning. Since then, by reason of the mill site and the business we got by it, the land had become the most valuable in that part of the country. Had I known Colonel Clark's whereabouts, I should have gone to him for advice and comfort. As it was, we were forced to await the issue without counsel. Polly Ann and I talked it over many times while Tom sat, morose and silent, in a corner. He was the pioneer pure and simple, afraid of no man, red or white, in open combat, but defenceless in such matters as this.

"'Tis Davy will save us, Tom," said Polly Ann, "with the l'arnin' he's got while the corn was grindin'."

I had, indeed, been reading at the mill while the hopper emptied itself, such odd books as drifted into Harrodstown. One of these was called "Bacon's Abridgment"; it dealt with law and it puzzled me sorely.

"And the children," Polly Ann continued,—"ye'll not make me pick up the four of 'em, and pack it to Louisiana, because Mr. Colfax wants the land we've made for ourselves."

There were four of them now, indeed,—the youngest still in the bark cradle in the corner. He bore a no less illustrious name than that of the writer of these chronicles.

It would be hard to say which was the more troubled, Tom or I, that windy morning we set out on the Danville trace. Polly Ann alone had been serene,—ay, and smiling and hopeful. She had kissed us each good-by impartially. And we left her, with a future governor of

Kentucky on her shoulder, tripping lightly down to the mill to grind the McGarrys' corn.

When the forest was cleared at Danville, Justice was housed first. She was not the serene, inexorable dame whom we have seen in pictures holding her scales above the jars of earth. Justice at Danville was a somewhat high-spirited, quarrelsome lady who decided matters oftenest with the stroke of a sword. There was a certain dignity about her temple withal, — for instance, if a judge wore linen, that linen must not be soiled. Nor was it etiquette for a judge to lay his own hands in chastisement on contemptuous persons, though Justice at Danville had more compassion than her sisters in older communities upon human failings.

There was a temple built to her "of hewed or sawed logs nine inches thick" — so said the specifications. Within the temple was a rude platform which served as a bar, and since Justice is supposed to carry a torch in her hand, there were no windows, — nor any windows in the jail next door, where some dozen offenders languished on the afternoon that Tom and I rode into town.

There was nothing auspicious in the appearance of Danville, and no man might have said then that the place was to be the scene of portentous conventions which were to decide the destiny of a State. Here was a sprinkling of log cabins, some in the building, and an inn, by courtesy so called. Tom and I would have preferred to sleep in the woods near by, with our feet to the blaze ; this was partly from motives of economy, and partly because Tom, in common with other pioneers, held an inn in contempt. But to come back to our arrival.

It was a sunny and windy afternoon, and the leaves were flying in the air. Around the court-house was a familiar, buzzing scene, — the backwoodsmen, lounging against the wall or brawling over their claims, the sleek agents and attorneys, and half a dozen of a newer type. These were adventurous young gentlemen of family, some of them lawyers and some of them late officers in the Continental army who had been rewarded with grants of land.

These were the patrons of the log tavern which stood near by with the blackened stumps around it, where there was much card-playing and roistering, ay, and even duelling, of nights.

"Thar's Mac," cried a backwoodsman who was sitting on the court-house steps as we rode up. "Howdy, Mac; be they tryin' to git your land, too?"

"Howdy, Mac," said a dozen more, paying a tribute to Tom's popularity. And some of them greeted me.

"Is this whar they take a man's land away?" says Tom, jerking his thumb at the open door.

Tom had no intention of uttering a witticism, but his words were followed by loud guffaws from all sides, even the lawyers joining in.

"I reckon this is the place, Tom," came the answer.

"I reckon I'll take a peep in thar," said Tom, leaping off his horse and shouldering his way to the door. I followed him, curious. The building was half full. Two elderly gentlemen of grave demeanor sat on stools behind a puncheon table, and near them a young man was writing. Behind the young man was a young gentleman who was closing a speech as we entered, and he had spoken with such vehemence that the perspiration stood out on his brow. There was a murmur from those listening, and I saw Tom pressing his way to the front.

"Hev any of ye seen a feller named Colfax?" cries Tom, in a loud voice. "He says he owns the land I settled, and he ain't ever seed it."

There was a roar of laughter, and even the judges smiled.

"Whar is he?" cries Tom; "said he'd be here to-day."

Another gust of laughter drowned his words, and then one of the judges got up and rapped on the table. The gentleman who had just made the speech glared mightily, and I supposed he had lost the effect of it.

"What do you mean by interrupting the court?" cried the judge. "Get out, sir, or I'll have you fined for contempt."

Tom looked dazed. But at that moment a hand was laid on his shoulder, and Tom turned.

"Why," says he, "thar's no devil if it ain't the Colonel. Polly Ann told me not to let 'em scar' me, Colonel."

"And quite right, Tom," Colonel Clark answered, smiling. He turned to the judges. "If your Honors please," said he, "this gentleman is an old soldier of mine, and unused to the ways of court. I beg your Honors to excuse him."

The judges smiled back, and the Colonel led us out of the building.

"Now, Tom," said he, after he had given me a nod and a kind word, "I know this Mr. Colfax, and if you will come into the tavern this evening after court, we'll see what can be done. I have a case of my own at present."

Tom was very grateful. He spent the remainder of the daylight hours with other friends of his, shooting at a mark near by, serenely confident of the result of his case now that Colonel Clark had a hand in it. Tom being one of the best shots in Kentucky, he had won two beaver skins before the early autumn twilight fell. As for me, I had an afternoon of excitement in the court, fascinated by the marvels of its procedures, by the impassioned speeches of its advocates, by the gravity of its judges. Ambition stirred within me.

The big room of the tavern was filled with men in heated talk over the day's doings, some calling out for black betty, some for rum, and some demanding apple toddies. The landlord's slovenly negro came in with candles, their feeble rays reënforcing the firelight and revealing the mud-chinked walls. Tom and I had barely sat ourselves down at a table in a corner, when in came Colonel Clark. Beside him was a certain swarthy gentleman whom I had noticed in the court, a man of some thirty-five years, with a fine, fleshy face and coal-black hair. His expression was not one to give us the hope of an amicable settlement, — in fact, he had the scowl of a thundercloud. He was talking quite angrily, and seemed not to heed those around him.

"Why the devil should I see the man, Clark?" he was saying.

The Colonel did not answer until they had stopped in front of us.

"Major Colfax," said he, "this is Sergeant Tom McChesney, one of the best friends I have in Kentucky. I think a vast deal of Tom, Major. He was one of the few that never failed me in the Illinois campaign. He is as honest as the day; you will find him plain-spoken if he speaks at all, and I have great hopes that you will agree. Tom, the Major and I are boyhood friends, and for the sake of that friendship he has consented to this meeting."

"I fear that your kind efforts will be useless, Colonel," Major Colfax put in, rather tartly. "Mr. McChesney not only ignores my rights, but was near to hanging my agent."

"What?" says Colonel Clark.

I glanced at Tom. However helpless he might be in a court, he could be counted on to stand up stanchly in a personal argument. His retorts would certainly not be brilliant, but they surely would be dogged. Major Colfax had begun wrong.

"I reckon ye've got no rights that I know on," said Tom. "I cleart the land and settled it, and I have a better right to it nor any man. And I've got a grant fer it."

"A Henderson grant!" cried the Major; "'tis so much worthless paper."

"I reckon it's good enough fer me," answered Tom. "It come from those who blazed their way out here and druv the redskins off. I don't know nothin' about this newfangled law, but 'tis a queer thing to my thinkin' if them that fit fer a place ain't got the fust right to it."

Major Colfax turned to Colonel Clark with marked impatience.

"I told you it would be useless, Clark," said he. "I care not a fig for a few paltry acres, and as God hears me I'm a reasonable man." (He did not look it then.) "But I swear by the evangels I'll let no squatter have the better of me. I did not serve Virginia for gold or land, but I lost my fortune in that service, and before I know it these backwoodsmen will have every acre of my grant.

It's an old story," said Mr. Colfax, hotly, "and why the devil did we fight England if it wasn't that every man should have his rights? By God, I'll not be frightened or wheedled out of mine. I sent an agent to Kentucky to deal politely and reasonably with these gentry. What did they do to him? Some of them threw him out neck and crop. And if I am not mistaken," said Major Colfax, fixing a piercing eye upon Tom, "if I am not mistaken, it was this worthy sergeant of yours who came near to hanging him, and made the poor devil flee Kentucky for his life."

This remark brought me near to an untimely laugh at the remembrance of Mr. Potts, and this though I was far too sober over the outcome of the conference. Colonel Clark seized hold of a chair and pushed it under Major Colfax.

"Sit down, gentlemen, we are not so far apart," said the Colonel, coolly. The slovenly negro lad passing at that time, he caught him by the sleeve. "Here, boy, a bowl of toddy, quick. And mind you brew it strong. Now, Tom," said he, "what is this fine tale about a hanging?"

"'Twan't nothin'," said Tom.

"You tell me you didn't try to hang Mr. Potts!" cried Major Colfax.

"I tell you nothin'," said Tom, and his jaw was set more stubbornly than ever.

Major Colfax glanced at Colonel Clark.

"You see!" he said a little triumphantly.

I could hold my tongue no longer.

"Major Colfax is unjust, sir," I cried. "'Twas Tom saved the man from hanging."

"Eh?" says Colonel Clark, turning to me sharply. "So you had a hand in this, Davy. I might have guessed as much."

"Who the devil is this?" says Mr. Colfax.

"A sort of ward of mine," answers the Colonel. "Drummer boy, financier, strategist, in my Illinois campaign. Allow me to present to you, Major, Mr. David

Ritchie. When my men objected to marching through ice-skimmed water up to their necks, Mr. Ritchie showed them how."

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the Major, staring at me from under his black eyebrows, "he was but a child."

"With an old head on his shoulders," said the Colonel, and his banter made me flush.

The negro boy arriving with the toddy, Colonel Clark served out three generous gourdfuls, a smaller one for me. "Your health, my friends, and I drink to a peaceful settlement."

"You may drink to the devil if you like," says Major Colfax, glaring at Tom.

"Come, Davy," said Colonel Clark, when he had taken half the gourd, "let's have the tale. I'll warrant you're behind this."

I flushed again, and began by stammering. For I had a great fear that Major Colfax's temper would fly into bits when he heard it.

"Well, sir," said I, "I was grinding corn at the mill when the man came. I thought him a smooth-mannered person, and he did not give his business. He was just for wheedling me. 'And was this McChesney's mill?' said he. 'Ay,' said I. 'Thomas McChesney?' 'Ay,' said I. Then he was all for praise of Thomas McChesney. 'Where is he?' said he. 'He is at the far pasture,' said I, 'and may be looked for any moment.' Whereupon he sits down and tries to worm out of me the business of the mill, the yield of the land. After that he begins to talk about the great people he knows, Sevier and Shelby and Robertson and Boone and the like. Ay, and his intimates, the Randolphs and the Popes and the Colfaxes in Virginia. 'Twas then I asked him if he knew Colonel Campbell of Abingdon."

"And what deviltry was that?" demanded the Colonel, as he dipped himself more of the toddy.

"I'll come to it, sir. Yes, Colonel Campbell was his intimate, and ranted if he did not tarry a week with him

at Abingdon on his journeys. After that he follows me to the cabin, and sees Polly Ann and Tom and the children on the floor poking a 'possum. 'Ah,' says he, in his softest voice, 'a pleasant family scene. And this is Mr. McChesney?' 'I'm your man,' says Tom. Then he praised the mill site and the land all over again. ''Tis good enough for a farmer,' says Tom. 'Who holds under Henderson's grant,' I cried. ''Twas that you wished to say an hour ago,' and I saw I had caught him fair."

"By the eternal!" cried Colonel Clark, bringing down his fist upon the table. "And what then?"

I glanced at Major Colfax, but for the life of me I could make nothing of his look.

"And what did your man say?" said Colonel Clark.

"He called on the devil to bite me, sir," I answered. The Colonel put down his gourd and began to laugh. The Major was looking at me fixedly.

"And what then?" said the Colonel.

"It was then Polly Ann called him a thief to take away the land Tom had fought for and paid for and tilled. The man was all politeness once more, said that the matter was unfortunate, and that a new and good title might be had for a few skins."

"He said that?" interrupted Major Colfax, half rising in his chair. "He was a damned scoundrel."

"So I thought, sir," I answered.

"The devil you did!" said the Major.

"Tut, Colfax," said the Colonel, pulling him by the sleeve of his greatcoat, "sit down and let the lad finish. And then?"

"Mr. Boone had told me of a land agent who had made off with Colonel Campbell's silver spoons from Abingdon, and how the Colonel had ridden east and west after him for a week with a rope hanging on his saddle. I began to tell this story, and instead of the description of Mr. Boone's man, I put in that of Mr. Potts, — in height some five feet nine, spare, of sallow complexion and a green greatcoat.

Major Colfax leaped up in his chair.

"Great Jehovah!" he shouted, "you described the wrong man."

Colonel Clark roared with laughter, thereby spilling some of his toddy.

"I'll warrant he did so," he cried; "and I'll warrant your agent went white as birch bark. Go on, Davy."

"There's not a great deal more, sir," I answered, looking apprehensively at Major Colfax, who still stood. "The man vowed I lied, but Tom laid hold of him and was for hurrying him off to Harrodstown at once."

"Which would ill have suited your purpose," put in the Colonel. "And what did you do with him?"

"We put him in a loft, sir, and then I told Tom that he was not Campbell's thief at all. But I had a craving to scare the man out of Kentucky. So I rode off to the neighbors and gave them the tale, and bade them come after nightfall as though to hang Campbell's thief, which they did, and they were near to smashing the door trying to get in the cabin. Tom told them the rascal had escaped, but they must needs come in and have jigs and toddies until midnight. When they were gone, and we called down the man from the loft, he was in such a state that he could scarce find the rungs of the ladder with his feet. He rode away into the night, and that was the last we heard of him. Tom was not to blame, sir."

Colonel Clark was speechless. And when for the moment he would conquer his mirth, a glance at Major Colfax would set him off again in laughter. I was puzzled. I thought my Colonel more human than of old.

"How now, Colfax?" he cried, giving a poke to the Major's ribs; "you hold the sequel to this farce."

The Major's face was purple, — with what emotion I could not say. Suddenly he swung full at me.

"Do you mean to tell me that you were the general of this hoax — you?" he demanded in a strange voice.

"The thing seemed an injustice to me, sir," I replied in self-defence, "and the man a rascal."

"A rascal!" cried the Major, "a knave, a poltroon, a simpleton! And he came to me with no tale of having

been outwitted by a stripling." Whereupon Major Colfax began to shake, gently at first, and presently he was in such a gale of laughter that I looked on him in amazement, Colonel Clark joining in again. The Major's eye rested at length upon Tom, and gradually he grew calm.

"McChesney," said he, "we'll have no bickerings in court among soldiers. The land is yours, and to-morrow my attorney shall give you a deed of it. Your hand, McChesney."

The stubbornness vanished from Tom's face, and there came instead a dazed expression as he thrust a great, hard hand into the Major's.

"'Twan't the land, sir," he stammered; "these varmints of settlers is gittin' thick as flies in July. 'Twas Polly Ann. I reckon I'm obleeged to ye, Major."

"There, there," said the Major, "I thank the Lord I came to Kentucky to see for myself. Damn the land. I have plenty more, — and little else." He turned quizzically to Colonel Clark, revealing a line of strong, white teeth. "Suppose we drink a health to your drummer boy," said he, lifting up his gourd.

CHAPTER IV

I CROSS THE MOUNTAINS ONCE MORE

"'Tis what ye've a right to, Davy," said Polly Ann, and she handed me a little buckskin bag on which she had been sewing. I opened it with trembling fingers, and poured out, chinking on the table, such a motley collection of coins as was never seen, — Spanish milled dollars, English sovereigns and crowns and shillings, paper issues of the Confederacy, and I know not what else. Tom looked on with a grin, while little Tom and Peggy reached out their hands in delight, their mother vigorously blocking their intentions.

"Ye've earned it yerself," said Polly Ann, forestalling my protest; "'tis what ye got by the mill, and I've laid it by bit by bit for yer eddication."

"And what do you get?" I cried, striving by feigned anger to keep the tears back from my eyes. "Have you no family to support?"

"Faith," she answered, "we have the mill that ye gave us, and the farm, and Tom's rifle. I reckon we'll fare better than ye think, tho' we'll miss ye sore about the place."

I picked out two sovereigns from the heap, dropped them in the bag, and thrust it into my hunting shirt.

"There," said I, my voice having no great steadiness, "not a penny more. I'll keep the bag for your sake, Polly Ann, and I'll take the mare for Tom's."

She had had a song on her lips ever since our coming back from Danville, seven days agone, a song on her lips and banter on her tongue, as she made me a new hunting shirt and breeches for the journey across the mountains.

And now with a sudden movement she burst into tears and flung her arms about my neck.

"Oh, Davy, 'tis no time to be stubborn," she sobbed, "and eddication is a costly thing. Ever sence I found ye on the trace, years ago, I've thought of ye one day as a great man. And when ye come back to us so big and l'arned, I'd wish to be saying with pride that I helped ye."

"And who else, Polly Ann?" I faltered, my heart racked with the parting. "You found me a homeless waif, and you gave me a home and a father and mother."

"Davy, ye'll not forget us when ye're great, I know ye'll not. 'Tis not in ye."

She stood back and smiled at me through her tears. The light of heaven was in that smile, and I have dreamed of it even since age has crept upon me. Truly, God sets his own mark on the pure in heart, on the unselfish.

I glanced for the last time around the rude cabin, every timber of which was dedicated to our sacrifices and our love: the fireplace with its rough stones, on the pegs the quaint butternut garments which Polly Ann had stitched, the baby in his bark cradle, the rough bedstead and the little trundle pushed under it, — and the very homely odor of the place is dear to me yet. Despite the rigors and the dangers of my life here, should I ever again find such happiness and peace in the world? The children clung to my knees; and with a "God bless ye, Davy, and come back to us," Tom squeezed my hand until I winced with pain. I leaped on the mare, and with blinded eyes rode down the familiar trail, past the mill, to Harrodsburg.

There Mr. Neville Colfax was waiting to take me across the mountains.

There is a story in every man's life, like the kernel in the shell of a hickory nut. I am ill acquainted with the arts of a biographer, but I seek to give in these pages little of the shell and the whole of the kernel of mine. 'Twould be unwise and tiresome to recount the journey

over the bare mountains with my new friend and benefactor. He was a strange gentleman, now jolly enough to make me shake with laughter and forget the sorrow of my parting, now moody for a night and a day ; now he was all sweetness, now all fire ; now he was abstemious, now self-indulgent and prodigal. He had a will like flint, and under it a soft heart. Cross his moods, and he hated you. I never thought to cross them, therefore he called me Davy, and his friendliness grew with our journey. His anger turned against rocks and rivers, landlords and emigrants, but never against me. And for this I was silently thankful.

And how had he come to take me over the mountains, and to put me in the way of studying law? Mindful of the kernel of my story, I have shortened the chapter to tell you out of the proper place. Major Colfax had made Tom and me sup with himself and Colonel Clark at the inn in Danville. And so pleased had the Major professed himself with my story of having outwitted his agent, that he must needs have more of my adventures. Colonel Clark gave him some, and Tom, — his tongue loosed by the toddy, — others. And the Colonel added to the debt I owed him by suggesting that Major Colfax take me to Virginia and recommend me to a lawyer there.

"Nay," cried the Major, "I will do more. I like the lad, for he is modest despite the way you have paraded him. I have an uncle in Richmond, Judge Wentworth, to whom I will take him in person. And when the Judge has done with him, if he is not flayed and tattooed with Blackstone, you may flay and tattoo me."

Thus did I break through my environment. And it was settled that I should meet the Major in seven days at Harrodstown.

Once in the journey did the Major make mention of a subject which had troubled me.

"Davy," said he, "Clark has changed. He is not the same man he was when I saw him in Williamsburg demanding supplies for his campaign."

"Virginia has used him shamefully, sir," I answered,

and suddenly there came flooding to my mind things I had heard the Colonel say in the campaign.

"Commonwealths have short memories," said the Major; "they will accept any sacrifice with a smile. Shakespeare, I believe, speaks of royal ingratitude — he knew not commonwealths. Clark was close-lipped once, not given to levity and — to toddy. There, there, he is my friend as well as yours, and I will prove it by pushing his cause in Virginia. Is yours Scotch anger? Then the devil fend me from it. A monarch would have given him fifty thousand acres on the Wabash, a palace, and a sufficient annuity. Virginia has given him a sword, eight thousand wild acres to be sure, repudiated the debts of his army, and left him to starve. Is there no room for a genius in our infant military establishment?"

At length, as Christmas drew near, we came to Major Colfax's seat, some forty miles out of the town of Richmond. It was called Neville's Grange, the Major's grandfather having so named it when he came out from England some sixty years before. It was a huge, rambling, draughty house of wood, — mortgaged, so the Major cheerfully informed me, thanks to the patriotism of the family. At Neville's Grange the Major kept a somewhat roisterous bachelor's hall. The place was overrun with negroes and dogs, and scarce a night went by that there was not merrymaking in the house with the neighbors. The time passed pleasantly enough until one frosty January morning Major Colfax had a twinge of remembrance, cried out for horses, took me into Richmond, and presented me to that very learned and decorous gentleman, Judge Wentworth.

My studies began within the hour of my arrival.

CHAPTER V

I MEET AN OLD BEDFELLOW

I SHALL burden no one with the dry chronicles of a law office. The acquirement of learning is a slow process in life, and perchance a slower one in the telling. I lacked not application during the three years of my stay in Richmond, and to earn my living I worked at such odd tasks as came my way.

The Judge resembled Major Colfax in but one trait: he was choleric. But he was painstaking and cautious, and I soon found out that he looked askance upon any one whom his nephew might recommend. He liked the Major, but he vowed him to be a roisterer and spendthrift, and one day, some months after my advent, the Judge asked me flatly how I came to fall in with Major Colfax. I told him. At the end of this conversation he took my breath away by bidding me come to live with him. Like many lawyers of that time, he had a little house in one corner of his grounds for his office. It stood under great spreading trees, and there I was wont to sit through many a summer day wrestling with the authorities. In the evenings we would have political arguments, for the Confederacy was in a seething state between the Federalists and the Republicans over the new Constitution, now ratified. Between the Federalists and the Jacobins, I would better say, for the virulence of the French Revolution was soon to be reflected among the parties on our side. Kentucky, swelled into an unmanageable territory, was come near to rebellion because the government was not strong enough to wrest from Spain the free navigation of the Mississippi.

And yet I yearned to go back, and looked forward eagerly to the time when I should have stored enough in my head to gain admission to the bar. I was therefore greatly embarrassed, when my examinations came, by an offer from Judge Wentworth to stay in Richmond and help him with his practice. It was an offer not to be lightly set aside, and yet I had made up my mind. He flew into a passion because of my desire to return to a wild country of outlaws and vagabonds.

"Why, damme," he cried, "Kentucky and this pretty State of Franklin which desired to chip off from North Carolina are traitorous places. Disloyal to Congress! Intriguing with a Spanish minister and the Spanish governor of Louisiana to secede from their own people and join the King of Spain. Bah!" he exclaimed, "if our new Federal Constitution is adopted I would hang Jack Sevier of Franklin and your Kentuckian Wilkinson to the highest trees west of the mountains."

I can see the little gentleman as he spoke, his black broadcloth coat and lace ruffles, his hand clutching the gold head of his cane, his face screwed up with indignation under his white wig. It was on a Sunday, and he was standing by the lilac bushes on the lawn in front of his square brick house.

"David," said he, more calmly, "I trust I have taught you something besides the law. I trust I have taught you that a strong Federal government alone will be the salvation of our country."

"You cannot blame Kentucky greatly, sir," said I, feeling that I must stand up for my friends. "The Federal government has done little enough for its people, and treated them to a deal of neglect. They won that western country for themselves with no Federal nor Virginia or North Carolina troops to help them. No man east of the mountains knows what that fight has been. No man east of the mountains knows the horror of that Indian warfare. This government gives them no protection now. Nay, Congress cannot even procure for them an outlet for their commerce. They must trade or perish.

Spain closes the Mississippi, arrests our merchants, seizes their goods, and often throws them into prison. No wonder they scorn the Congress as weak and impotent."

The Judge stared at me aghast. It was the first time I had dared oppose him on this subject.

"What," he sputtered, "what? You are a Separatist, —you whom I have received into the bosom of my family!" Seizing the cane at the middle, he brandished it in my face.

"Don't misunderstand me, sir," said I. "You have given me books to read, and have taught me what may be the destiny of our nation on this continent. But you must forgive a people whose lives have been spent in a fierce struggle for their homes, whose families have nearly all lost some member by massacre, who are separated by hundreds of miles of wilderness from you."

He looked at me speechless, and turned and walked into the house. I thought I had sinned past forgiveness, and I was beyond description uncomfortable, for he had been like a parent to me. But the next morning, at half after seven, he walked into the little office and laid down some gold pieces on my table. Gold was very scarce in those days.

"They are for your journey, David," said he. "My only comfort in your going back is that you may grow up to put some temperance into their wild heads. I have a commission for you at Jonesboro, in what was once the unspeakable State of Franklin. You can stop there on your way to Kentucky." He drew from his pocket a great bulky letter, addressed to "Thomas Wright, Esquire, Barrister-at-law in Jonesboro, North Carolina." For the good gentleman could not bring himself to write Franklin.

It was late in September of the year 1788 when I set out on my homeward way — for Kentucky was home to me. I was going back to Polly Ann and Tom, and visions of that home-coming rose before my eyes as I rode. In a packet in my saddle-bags were some dozen letters which Mr. Wrenn, the schoolmaster at Harrodstown, had writ

at Polly Ann's bidding. I have the letters yet. For Mr. Wrenn was plainly an artist, and had set down on the paper the words just as they had flowed from her heart. Ay, and there was news in the letters, though not surprising news among those pioneer families whom God blessed so abundantly. Since David Ritchie McChesney (I mention the name with pride) had risen above the necessities of a bark cradle, two more had succeeded him, a brother and a sister. I spurred my horse onward, and thought impatiently of the weary leagues between my family and me.

I have often pictured myself on that journey. I was twenty-one years of age, though one would have called me older. My looks were nothing to boast of, and I was grown up tall and weedy, so that I must have made quite a comical sight, with my long legs dangling on either side of the pony. I wore a suit of gray homespun, and in my saddle-bags I carried four precious law books, the stock in trade which my generous patron had given me. But as I mounted the slopes of the mountains my spirits rose too at the prospect of the life before me. The woods were all aflame with color, with wine and amber and gold, and the hills wore the misty mantle of shadowy blue so dear to my youthful memory. As I left the rude taverns of a morning and jogged along the heights, I watched the vapors rise and roll away from the valleys far beneath, and saw great flocks of ducks and swans and cackling geese darkening the air in their southward flight. Strange that I fell in with no company, for the trail leading into the Tennessee country was widened and broadened beyond belief, and everywhere I came upon blackened fires and abandoned lean-tos, and refuse bones gnawed by the wolves and bleached by the weather. I slept in some of these lean-tos, with my fire going brightly, indifferent to the howl of wolves in chase or the scream of a panther pouncing on its prey. For I was born of the wilderness. It had no terrors for me, nor did I ever feel alone. The great cliffs with their clinging, gnarled trees, the vast mountains clothed in the motley colors of the autumn,

the sweet and smoky smell of the Indian summer, — all were dear to me.

As I drew near to Jonesboro my thoughts began to dwell upon that strange and fascinating man who had entertained Polly Ann and Tom and me so lavishly on our way to Kentucky, — Captain John Sevier. For he had made a great noise in the world since then, and the wrath of such men as my late patron was heavy upon him. Yes, John Sevier, Nollichucky Jack, had been a king in all but name since I had seen him, the head of such a principality as stirred the blood to read about. It comprised the Watauga settlement among the mountains of what is now Tennessee, and was called prosaically (as is the wont of the Anglo-Saxon) the free State of Franklin. There were certain conservative and unimaginative souls in this mountain principality who for various reasons held their old allegiance to the State of North Carolina. One Colonel Tipton led these loyalist forces, and armed partisans of either side had for some years ridden up and down the length of the land, burning and pillaging and slaying. We in Virginia had heard of two sets of courts in Franklin, of two sets of legislators. But of late the rumor had grown persistently that Nollichucky Jack was now a kind of fugitive, and that he had passed the summer pleasantly enough fighting Indians in the vicinity of Nick-a-jack Cave.

It was court day as I rode into the little town of Jonesboro, the air sparkling like a blue diamond over the mountain crests, and I drew deep into my lungs once more the scent of the frontier life I had loved so well. In the streets currents of excited men flowed and backed and eddied, backwoodsmen and farmers in the familiar hunting shirts of hide or homespun, and lawyers in dress less rude. A line of horses stood kicking and switching their tails in front of the log tavern, rough carts and wagons had been left here and there with their poles on the ground, and between these, piles of skins were heaped up and bags of corn and grain. The log meeting-house was deserted, but the court-house was the centre of such a

swirling crowd as I had often seen at Harrodstown. Now there are brawls and brawls, and I should have thought with shame of my Kentucky bringing-up had I not perceived that this was no ordinary court day, and that an unusual excitement was in the wind.

Tying my horse, and making my way through the press in front of the tavern door, I entered the common room, and found it stifling, brawling and drinking going on apace. Scarce had I found a seat before the whole room was emptied by one consent, all crowding out of the door after two men who began a rough-and-tumble fight in the street. I had seen rough-and-tumble fights in Kentucky, and if I have forborne to speak of them it is because there always has been within me a loathing for them. And so I sat quietly in the common room until the landlord came. I asked him if he could direct me to Mr. Wright's house, as I had a letter for that gentleman. His answer was to grin at me incredulously.

"I reckoned you wah'nt from these parts," said he. "Wright's — out o' town."

"What is the excitement?" I demanded.

He stared at me.

"Nollichucky Jack's been heah, in Jonesboro, young man," said he.

"What," I exclaimed, "Colonel Sevier?"

"Ay, Sevier," he repeated. "With Martin and Tipton and all the Caroliny men right heah, having a council of mility officers in the court-house, in rides Jack with his frontier boys like a whirlwind. He bean't afeard of 'em, and a bench warrant out ag'in him for high treason. Never seed sech a recklessness. Never had sech a jamboree sence I kept the tavern. They was in this here room most of the day, and they was five fights before they set down to dinner."

"And Colonel Tipton?" I said.

"Oh, Tipton," said he, "he hain't afeard neither, but he hain't got men enough."

"And where is Sevier now?" I demanded.

"How long hev you ben in town?" was his answer.

I told him.

"Wal," said he, shifting his tobacco from one sallow cheek to the other, "I reckon he and his boys rud out just afore you come in. Mark me," he added, "when I tell ye there'll be trouble yet. Tipton and Martin and the Caroliny folks is burnin' mad with Chucky Jack for the murder of Corn Tassel and other peaceful chiefs. But Jack hez a wild lot with him, — some of the Nollichucky Cave traders, and there's one young lad that looks like he was a gentleman once. I reckon Jack himself wouldn't like to get into a fight with him. He's a wild one. Great Goliah," he exclaimed, running to the door, "ef thar ain't a-goin' to be another fight! Never seed sech a day in Jonesboro."

I likewise ran to the door, and this fight interested me. There was a great, black-bearded mountaineer-farmer-desperado in the midst of a circle, pouring out a torrent of abuse at a tall young man.

"That thar's Hump Gibson," said the landlord, genially pointing out the black-bearded ruffian, "and the young lawyer feller hez git a jedgment ag'in him. He's got spunk, but I reckon Hump 'll t'ar the innards out'n him ef he stands thar a great while."

"Ye'll git jedgment ag'in me, ye Caroliny splinter, will ye?" yelled Mr. Gibson, with an oath. "I'll pay Bill Wilder the skins when I git ready, and all the pinhook lawyers in Washington County won't budge me a mite."

"You'll pay Bill Wilder or go to jail, by the eternal," cried the young man, quite as angrily, whereupon I looked upon him with a mixture of admiration and commiseration, with a gulping certainty in my throat that I was about to see murder done. He was a strange young man, with the rare marked look that would compel even a poor memory to pick him out again. For example, he was very tall and very slim, with red hair blown every which way over a high and towering forehead that seemed as long as the face under it. The face, too, was long, and all freckled by the weather. The blue eyes held me in wonder, and these blazed with such prodi-

gious wrath that, if a look could have killed, Hump Gibson would have been stricken on the spot. Mr. Gibson was, however, very much alive.

"Skin out o' here afore I kill ye," he shouted, and he charged at the slim young man like a buffalo, while the crowd held its breath. I, who had looked upon cruel sights in my day, was turning away with a kind of sickening when I saw the slim young man dodge the rush. He did more. With two strides of his long legs he reached the fence, ripped off the topmost rail, and his huge antagonist, having changed his direction and coming at him with a bellow, was met with the point of a scantling in the pit of his stomach, and Mr. Gibson fell heavily to the ground. It had all happened in a twinkling, and there was a moment's lull while the minds of the onlookers needed readjustment, and then they gave vent to ecstasies of delight.

"Great Goliah!" cried the landlord, breathlessly, "he shet him up jest like a jack-knife."

Awe-struck, I looked at the tall young man, and he was the very essence of wrath. Unmindful of the plaudits, he stood brandishing the fence-rail over the great, writhing figure on the ground. And he was slobbering. I recall that this fact gave a twinge to something in my memory.

"Come on, Hump Gibson," he cried, "come on!"—at which the crowd went wild with pure joy. Witticisms flew.

"Thought ye was goin' to eat 'im up, Hump?" said a friend.

"Ye ain't hed yer meal yet, Hump," reminded another.

Mr. Hump Gibson arose slowly out of the dust, yet he did not stand straight.

"Come on, come on!" cried the young lawyer-fellow, and he thrust the point of the rail within a foot of Mr. Gibson's stomach.

"Come on, Hump!" howled the crowd, but Mr. Gibson stood irresolute. He lacked the supreme test of courage which was demanded on this occasion. Then he turned and walked away very slowly, as though his pace might

mitigate in some degree the shame of his retreat. The young man flung away the fence-rail, and, thrusting aside the overzealous among his admirers, he strode past me into the tavern, his anger still hot.

"Hooray fer Jackson!" they shouted. "Hooray fer Andy Jackson!"

Andy Jackson! Then I knew. Then I remembered a slim, wild, sandy-haired boy digging his toes in the red mud long ago at the Waxhaws Settlement. And I recalled with a smile my own fierce struggle at the schoolhouse with the same boy, and how his slobbering had been my salvation. I turned and went in after him with the landlord, who was rubbing his hands with glee.

"I reckon Hump won't come crowin' round heah any more co't days, Mr. Jackson," said our host.

But Mr. Jackson swept the room with his eyes and then glared at the landlord so that he gave back.

"Where's my man?" he demanded.

"Your man, Mr. Jackson?" stammered the host.

"Great Jehovah!" cried Mr. Jackson, "I believe he's afraid to race. He had a horse that could show heels to my Nancy, did he? And he's gone, you say?"

A light seemed to dawn on the landlord's countenance.

"God bless ye, Mr. Jackson!" he cried, "ye don't mean that young daredevil that was with Sevier?"

"With Sevier?" says Jackson.

"Ay," says the landlord; "he's been a-fightin' with Sevier all summer, and I reckon he ain't afeard of nothin' any more than you. Wait — his name was Temple — Nick Temple, they called him."

"Nick Temple!" I cried, starting forward.

"Where's he gone?" said Mr. Jackson. "He was going to bet me a six-forty he has at Nashboro that his horse could beat mine on the Greasy Cove track. Where's he gone?"

"Gone!" said the landlord, apologetically, "Nollichucky Jack and his boys left town an hour ago."

"Is he a man of honor or isn't he?" said Mr. Jackson, fiercely.

"Lord, sir, I only seen him once, but I'd stake my oath on it."

"Do you mean to say Mr. Temple has been here — Nicholas Temple?" I said.

The bewildered landlord turned towards me helplessly.

"Who the devil are you, sir?" cried Mr. Jackson.

"Tell me what this Mr. Temple was like," said I.

The landlord's face lighted up.

"Faith, a thoroughbred hoss," says he; "sech nostrils, and sech a gray eye with the devil in it fer go — yellow ha'r, and ez tall ez Mr. Jackson heah."

"And you say he's gone off again with Sevier?"

"They rud into town" (he lowered his voice, for the room was filling), "snapped their fingers at Tipton and his warrant, and rud out ag'in. My God, but that was like Nollichucky Jack. Say, stranger, when your Mr. Temple smiled — "

"He is the man!" I cried; "tell me where to find him."

Mr. Jackson, who had been divided between astonishment and impatience and anger, burst out again.

"What the devil do you mean by interfering with my business, sir?"

"Because it is my business too," I answered, quite as testily; "my claim on Mr. Temple is greater than yours."

"By Jehovah!" cried Jackson, "come outside, sir, come outside!"

The landlord backed away, and the men in the tavern began to press around us expectantly.

"Gallop into him, Andy!" cried one.

"Don't let him git near no fences, stranger," said another.

Mr. Jackson turned on this man with such truculence that he edged away to the rear of the room.

"Step out, sir," said Mr. Jackson, starting for the door before I could reply. I followed perforce, not without misgivings, the crowd pushing eagerly after. Before we reached the dusty street Jackson began pulling off his coat. In a trice the shouting onlookers had made a ring, and we stood facing each other, he in his shirt-sleeves.

"We'll fight fair," said he, his lips wetting.

"Very good," said I, "if you are still accustomed to this hasty manner. You have not asked my name, my standing, nor my reasons for wanting Mr. Temple."

I know not whether it was what I said that made him stare, or how I said it.

"Pistols, if you like," said he.

"No," said I; "I am in a hurry to find Mr. Temple. I fought you this way once, and it's quicker."

"You fought me this way once?" he repeated. The noise of the crowd was hushed, and they drew nearer to hear.

"Come, Mr. Jackson," said I, "you are a lawyer and a gentleman, and so am I. I do not care to be beaten to a pulp, but I am not afraid of you. And I am in a hurry. If you will step back into the tavern, I will explain to you my reasons for wishing to get to Mr. Temple."

Mr. Jackson stared at me the more.

"By the eternal," said he, "you are a cool man. Give me my coat," he shouted to the bystanders, and they helped him on with it. "Now," said he, as they made to follow him, "keep back. I would talk to this gentleman. By the heavens," he cried, when he had gained the room, "I believe you are not afraid of me. I saw it in your eyes."

Then I laughed.

"Mr. Jackson," said I, "doubtless you do not remember a homeless boy named David whom you took to your uncle's house in the Waxhaws—"

"I do," he exclaimed, "as I live I do. Why, we slept together."

"And you stumped your toe getting into bed and swore," said I.

At that he laughed so heartily that the landlord came running across the room.

"And we fought together at the Old Fields School. Are you that boy?" and he scanned me again. "By God, I believe you are." Suddenly his face clouded once more. "But what about Temple?" said he.

"Ah," I answered, "I come to that quickly. Mr. Temple is my cousin. After I left your uncle's house my father took me to Charlestown."

"Is he a Charlestown Temple?" demanded Mr. Jackson. "For I spent some time gambling and horse-racing with the gentry there, and I know many of them. I was a wild lad" (I repeat his exact words), "and I ran up a bill in Charlestown that would have filled a folio volume. Faith, all I had left me was the clothes on my back and a good horse. I made up my mind one night that if I could pay my debts and get out of Charlestown I would go into the back country and study law and sober down. There was a Mr. Braiden in the ordinary who staked me two hundred dollars at rattle-and-snap against my horse. Gad, sir, that was providence. I won. I left Charlestown with honor, I studied law at Salisbury in North Carolina, and I have come here to practise it."

"You seem to have the talent," said I, smiling at the remembrance of the Hump Gibson incident.

"That is my history in a nutshell," said Mr. Jackson. "And now," he added, "since you are Mr. Temple's cousin and friend and an old acquaintance of mine to boot, I will tell you where I think he is."

"Where is that?" I asked eagerly.

"I'll stake a cowbell that Sevier will stop at the Widow Brown's," he replied. "I'll put you on the road. But mind you, you are to tell Mr. Temple that he is to come back here and race me at Greasy Cove."

"I'll warrant him to come," said I.

Whereupon we left the inn together, more amicably than before. Mr. Jackson had a thoroughbred horse near by that was a pleasure to see, and my admiration of his mount seemed to set me as firmly in Mr. Jackson's esteem again as that gentleman himself sat in the saddle. He was as good as his word, rode out with me some distance on the road, and reminded me at the last that Nick was to race him.

CHAPTER VI

THE WIDOW BROWN'S

It was not to my credit that I should have lost the trail, after Mr. Jackson put me straight. But the night was dark, the country unknown to me, and heavily wooded and mountainous. In addition to these things my mind ran like fire. My thoughts sometimes flew back to the wondrous summer evening when I trod the Nollichucky trace with Tom and Polly Ann, when I first looked down upon the log palace of that prince of the border, John Sevier. Well I remembered him, broad-shouldered, handsome, gay, a courtier in buckskin. Small wonder he was idolized by the Watauga settlers, that he had been their leader in the struggle of Franklin for liberty. And small wonder that Nick Temple should be in his following.

Nick! My mind was in a torment concerning him. What of his mother? Should I speak of having seen her? I went blindly through the woods for hours after the night fell, my horse stumbling and weary, until at length I came to a lonely clearing on the mountain side, and a fierce pack of dogs dashed barking at my horse's heels. There was a dark cabin ahead, indistinct in the starlight, and there I knocked until a gruff voice answered me and a tousled man came to the door. Yes, I had missed the trail. He shook his head when I asked for the Widow Brown's, and bade me share his bed for the night. No, I would go on, I was used to the backwoods. Thereupon he thawed a little, kicked the dogs, and pointed to where the mountain dipped against the star-studded sky. There was a trail there which led direct to the Widow Brown's, if I could follow it. So I left him.

Once the fear had settled deeply of missing Nick at the Widow Brown's, I put my mind on my journey, and thanks to my early training I was able to keep the trail. It doubled around the spurs, forded stony brooks in diagonals, and often in the darkness of the mountain forest I had to feel for the blazes on the trees. There was no making time. I gained the notch with the small hours of the morning, started on with the descent, crisscrossing, following a stream here and a stream there, until at length the song of the higher waters ceased and I knew that I was in the valley. Suddenly there was no crown-cover over my head. I had gained the road once more, and I followed it hopefully, avoiding the stumps and the deep wagon ruts where the ground was spongy.

The morning light revealed a milky mist through which the trees showed like phantoms. Then there came stains upon the mist of royal purple, of scarlet, of yellow like a mandarin's robe, peeps of deep blue fading into azure as the mist lifted. The fiery eye of the sun was cocked over the crest, and beyond me I saw a house with its logs all golden brown in the level rays, the withered cornstalks orange among the blackened stumps. My horse stopped of his own will at the edge of the clearing. A cock crew, a lean hound prostrate on the porch of the house rose to his haunches, sniffed, growled, leaped down, and ran to the road and sniffed again. I listened, startled, and made sure of the distant ring of many hoofs. And yet I stayed there, irresolute. Could it be Tipton and his men riding from Jonesboro to capture Sevier? The hoof-beats grew louder, and then the hound in the road gave tongue to the short, sharp bark that is the call to arms. Other dogs, hitherto unseen, took up the cry, and turning in my saddle I saw a body of men riding hard at me through the alley in the forest. At their head, on a heavy, strong-legged horse, was one who might have stood for the figure of turbulence, and I made no doubt that this was Colonel Tipton himself,— Colonel Tipton, once secessionist, now champion of the Old North State and arch-enemy of John Sevier. At sight of me he reined

up so violently that his horse went back on his haunches, and the men behind were near overriding him.

"Look out, boys," he shouted, with a fierce oath, "they've got guards out!" He flung back one hand to his holster for a pistol, while the other reached for the powder flask at his belt. He primed the pan, and, seeing me immovable, set his horse forward at an amble, his pistol at the cock.

"Who in hell are you?" he cried.

"A traveller from Virginia," I answered.

"And what are you doing here?" he demanded, with another oath.

"I have just this moment come here," said I, as calmly as I might. "I lost the trail in the darkness."

He glared at me, purpling, perplexed.

"Is Sevier there?" said he, pointing at the house.

"I don't know," said I.

Tipton turned to his men, who were listening.

"Surround the house," he cried, "and watch this fellow."

I rode on perforce towards the house with Tipton and three others, while his men scattered over the corn-field and cursed the dogs. And then we saw in the open door the figure of a woman shading her eyes with her hand. We pulled up, five of us, before the porch in front of her.

"Good morning, Mrs. Brown," said Tipton, gruffly.

"Good morning, Colonel," answered the widow.

Tipton leaped from his horse, flung the bridle to a companion, and put his foot on the edge of the porch to mount. Then a strange thing happened. The lady turned deftly, seized a chair from within, and pulled it across the threshold. She sat herself down firmly, an expression on her face which hinted that the late lamented Mr. Brown had been a dominated man. Colonel Tipton stopped, staggering from the very impetus of his charge, and gazed at her blankly.

"I have come for Colonel Sevier," he blurted. And then, his anger rising, "I will have no trifling, ma'am. He is in this house."

"La! you don't tell me," answered the widow, in a tone that was wholly conversational.

"He is in this house," shouted the Colonel.

"I reckon you've guessed wrong, Colonel," said the widow.

There was an awkward pause until Tipton heard a titter behind him. Then his wrath exploded.

"I have a warrant against the scoundrel for high treason," he cried, "and, by God, I will search the house and serve it."

Still the widow sat tight. The Rock of Ages was neither more movable nor calmer than she.

"Surely, Colonel, you would not invade the house of an unprotected female."

The Colonel, evidently with a great effort, throttled his wrath for the moment. His new tone was apologetic but firm.

"I regret to have to do so, ma'am," said he, "but both sexes are equal before the law."

"The law!" repeated the widow, seemingly tickled at the word. She smiled indulgently at the Colonel. "What a pity, Mr. Tipton, that the law compels you to arrest such a good friend of yours as Colonel Sevier. What self-sacrifice, Colonel Tipton! What nobility!"

There was a second titter behind him, whereat he swung round quickly, and the crimson veins in his face looked as if they must burst. He saw me with my hand over my mouth.

"You warned him, damn you!" he shouted, and turning again leaped to the porch and tried to squeeze past the widow into the house.

"How dare you, sir?" she shrieked, giving him a vigorous push backwards. The four of us, his three men and myself, laughed outright. Tipton's rage leaped its bounds. He returned to the attack again and again, and yet at the crucial moment his courage would fail him and he would let the widow thrust him back. Suddenly I became aware that there were two new spectators of this comedy. I started and looked again, and was near to

crying out at sight of one of them. The others did cry out, but Tipton paid no heed.

Ten years had made his figure more portly, but I knew at once the man in the well-fitting hunting shirt, with the long hair flowing to his shoulders, with the keen, dark face and courtly bearing and humorous eyes. Yes, humorous even now, for he stood, smiling at this comedy played by his enemy, unmindful of his peril. The widow saw him before Tipton did, so intent was he on the struggle.

"Enough!" she cried, "enough, John Tipton!" Tipton drew back involuntarily, and a smile broadened on the widow's face. "Shame on you for doubting a lady's word! Allow me to present to you — Colonel Sevier."

Tipton turned, stared as a man might who sees a ghost, and broke into such profanity as I have seldom heard.

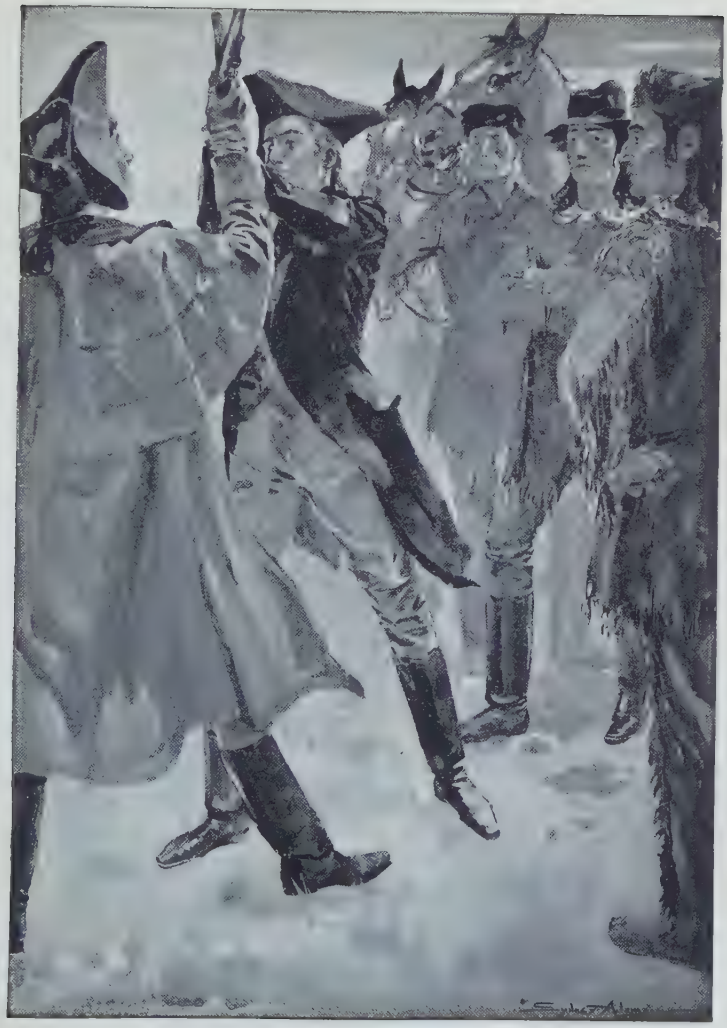
"By the eternal God, John Sevier," he shouted, "I'll hang you to the nearest tree!"

Colonel Sevier merely made a little ironical bow and looked at the gentleman beside him.

"I have surrendered to Colonel Love," he said.

Tipton snatched from his belt the pistol which he might have used on me, and there flashed through my head the thought that some powder might yet be held in its pan. We cried out, all of us, his men, the widow, and myself, — all save Sevier, who stood quietly, smiling. Suddenly, while we waited for murder, a tall figure shot out of the door past the widow, the pistol flew out of Tipton's hand, and Tipton swung about with something like a bellow, to face Mr. Nicholas Temple.

Well I knew him! And oddly enough at that time Riddle's words of long ago came to me, "God help the woman you love or the man you fight." How shall I describe him? He was thin even to seeming frailness, — yet it was the frailness of the race-horse. The golden hair, sun-tanned, awry across his forehead, the face the same thin and finely cut face of the boy. The gray eyes held an anger that did not blaze; it was far more dangerous than that. Colonel John Tipton looked, and as I live he recoiled.



"The pistol flew out of Tipton's hand."

"If you touch him, I'll kill you," said Mr. Temple. Nor did he say it angrily. I marked for the first time that he held a pistol in his slim fingers. What Tipton might have done when he swung to his new bearings is mere conjecture, for Colonel Sevier himself stepped up on the porch, laid his hand on Temple's arm, and spoke to him in a low tone. What he said we didn't hear. The astonishing thing was that neither of them for the moment paid any attention to the infuriated man beside them. I saw Nick's expression change. He smiled, — the smile the landlord had described, the smile that made men and women willing to die for him. After that Colonel Sevier stooped down and picked up the pistol from the floor of the porch and handed it with a bow to Tipton, butt first. Tipton took it, seemingly without knowing why, and at that instant a negro boy came around the house, leading a horse. Sevier mounted it without a protest from any one.

"I am ready to go with you, gentlemen," he said.

Colonel Tipton slipped his pistol back into his belt, stepped down from the porch, and leaped into his saddle, and he and his men rode off into the stump-lined alley in the forest that was called a road. Nick stood beside the widow, staring after them until they had disappeared.

"My horse, boy!" he shouted to the gaping negro, who vanished on the errand.

"What will you do, Mr. Temple?" asked the widow.

"Rescue him, ma'am," cried Nick, beginning to pace up and down. "I'll ride to Turner's. Cozby and Evans are there, and before night we shall have made Jonesboro too hot to hold Tipton and his cutthroats."

"La, Mr. Temple," said the widow, with unfeigned admiration, "I never saw the like of you. But I know John Tipton, and he'll have Colonel Sevier started for North Carolina before our boys can get to Jonesboro."

"Then we'll follow," says Nick, beginning to pace again. Suddenly, at a cry from the widow, he stopped and stared at me, a light in his eye like a point of steel. His hand slipped to his waist.

"A spy," he said, and turned and smiled at the lady,

who was watching him with a kind of fascination; "but damnably cool," he continued, looking at me. "I wonder if he thinks to outride me on that beast? Look you, sir," he cried, as Mrs. Brown's negro came back struggling with a deep-ribbed, high-crested chestnut that was making half circles on his hind legs, "I'll give you to the edge of the woods, and lay you a six-forty against a pair of moccasins that you never get back to Tipton."

"God forbid that I ever do," I answered fervently.

"What," he exclaimed, "and you here with him on this sneak's errand!"

"I am here with him on no errand," said I. "He and his crew came on me a quarter of an hour since at the edge of the clearing. Mr. Temple, I am here to find you, and to save time I will ride with you."

"Egad, you'll have to ride like the devil then," said he, and he stooped and snatched the widow's hand and kissed it with a daring gallantry that I had thought to find in him. He raised his eyes to hers.

"Good-by, Mr. Temple, she said, — there was a tremor in her voice, — "and may you save our Jack!"

He snatched the bridle from the boy, and with one leap he was on the rearing, wheeling horse. "Come on," he cried to me, and, waving his hat at the lady on the porch, he started off with a gallop up the trail in the opposite direction from that which Tipton's men had taken.

All that I saw of Mr. Nicholas Temple on that ride to Turner's was his back, and presently I lost sight of that. In truth, I never got to Turner's at all, for I met him coming back at the wind's pace, a huge, swarthy, determined man at his side and four others spurring after, the spume dripping from the horses' mouths. They did not so much as look at me as they passed, and there was nothing left for me to do but to turn my tired beast and follow at any pace I could make towards Jonesboro.

It was late in the afternoon before I reached the town, the town set down among the hills like a caldron boiling over with the wrath of Franklin. The news of

the capture of their beloved Sevier had flown through the mountains like seeds on the autumn wind, and from north, south, east, and west the faithful were coming in, cursing Tipton and Carolina as they rode.

I tethered my tired beast at the first picket, and was no sooner on my feet than I was caught in the hurrying stream of the crowd and fairly pushed and beaten towards the court-house. Around it a thousand furious men were packed. I heard cheering, hoarse and fierce cries, threats and imprecations, and I knew that they were listening to oratory. I was suddenly shot around the corner of a house, saw the orator himself, and gasped.

It was Nicholas Temple. There was something awe-impelling in the tall, slim, boyish figure that towered above the crowd, in the finely wrought, passionate face, in the voice charged with such an anger as is given to few men.

"What has North Carolina done for Franklin?" he cried. "Protected her? No. Repudiated her? Yes. You gave her to the Confederacy for a war debt, and the Confederacy flung her back. You shook yourselves free from Carolina's tyranny, and traitors betrayed you again. And now they have betrayed your leader. Will you avenge him, or will you sit down like cowards while they hang him for treason?"

His voice was drowned, but he stood immovable with arms folded until there was silence again.

"Will you rescue him?" he cried, and the roar rose again. "Will you avenge him? By to-morrow we shall have two thousand here. Invade North Carolina, humble her, bring her to her knees, and avenge John Sevier!"

Pandemonium reigned. Hats were flung in the air, rifles fired, shouts and curses rose and blended into one terrifying note. Gradually, in the midst of this mad uproar, the crowd became aware that another man was standing upon the stump from which Nicholas Temple had leaped. "Cozby!" some one yelled, "Cozby!" The cry was taken up. "Huzzay for Cozby! He'll lead us into Caroliny." He was the huge, swarthy man I had seen riding hard with Nick that morning. A sculptor

might have chosen his face and frame for a type of the iron-handed leader of pioneers. Will was supreme in the great features, — inflexible, indomitable will. His hunting shirt was open across his great chest, his black hair fell to his shoulders, and he stood with a compelling hand raised for silence. And when he spoke, slowly, resonantly, men fell back before his words.

"I admire Mr. Temple's courage, and above all his loyalty to our beloved General," said Major Cozby. "But Mr. Temple is young, and the heated counsels of youth must not prevail. My friends, in order to save Jack Sevier we must be moderate."

His voice, strong as it was, was lost. "To hell with moderation!" they shouted. "Down with North Carolina! We'll fight her!"

He got silence again by the magnetic strength he had in him.

"Very good," he said, "but get your General first. If we lead you across the mountains now, his blood will be upon your heads. No man is a better friend to Jack Sevier than I. Leave his rescue to me, and I will get him for you." He paused, and they were stilled perforce. "I will get him for you," he repeated slowly, "or North Carolina will pay for the burial of James Cozby."

There was an instant when they might have swung either way.

"How will ye do it?" came in a thin, piping voice from somewhere near the stump. It may have been this that turned their minds. Others took up the question, "How will ye do it, Major Cozby?"

"I don't know," cried the Major, "I don't know. And if I did know, I wouldn't tell you. But I will get Nollichucky Jack if I have to burn Morganton and rake the General out of the cinders!"

Five hundred hands flew up, five hundred voices cried, "I'm with ye, Major Cozby!" But the Major only shook his head and smiled. What he said was lost in the roar. Fighting my way forward, I saw him get down from the stump, put his hand kindly on Nick's shoulder, and lead

him into the court-house. They were followed by a score of others, and the door was shut behind them.

It was then I bethought myself of the letter to Mr. Wright, and I sought for some one who would listen to my questions as to his whereabouts. At length the man himself was pointed out to me, haranguing an excited crowd of partisans in front of his own gate. Some twenty minutes must have passed before I could get any word with him. He was a vigorous little man, with black eyes like buttons, he wore brown homespun and white stockings, and his hair was clubbed. When he had yielded the ground to another orator, I handed him the letter. He drew me aside, read it on the spot, and became all hospitality at once. The town was full, and though he had several friends staying in his house I should join them. Was my horse fed? Dinner had been forgotten that day, but would I enter and partake? In short, I found myself suddenly provided for, and I lost no time in getting my weary mount into Mr. Wright's little stable. And then I sat down, with several other gentlemen, at Mr. Wright's board, where there was much guessing as to Major Cozby's plan.

"No other man west of the mountains could have calmed that crowd after that young daredevil Temple had stirred them up," declared Mr. Wright.

I ventured to say that I had business with Mr. Temple.

"Faith, then, I will invite him here," said my host. "But I warn you, Mr. Ritchie, that he is a trigger set on the hair. If he does not fancy you, he may quarrel with you and shoot you. And he is in no temper to be trifled with to-day."

"I am not an easy person to quarrel with," I answered.

"To look at you, I shouldn't say that you were," said he. "We are going to the court-house, and I will see if I can get a word with the young Hotspur and send him to you. Do you wait here."

I waited on the porch as the day waned. The tumult of the place had died down, for men were gathering in the houses to discuss and conjecture. And presently,

sauntering along the street in a careless fashion, his spurs trailing in the dust, came Nicholas Temple. He stopped before the house and stared at me with a fine insolence, and I wondered whether I myself had not been too hasty in reclaiming him. A greeting died on my lips.

"Well, sir," he said, "so you are the gentleman who has been dogging me all day."

"I dog no one, Mr. Temple," I replied bitterly.

"We'll not quibble about words," said he. "Would it be impertinent to ask your business — and perhaps your name?"

"Did not Mr. Wright give you my name?" I exclaimed.

"He might have mentioned it, I did not hear. Is it of such importance?"

At that I lost my temper entirely.

"It may be, and it may not," I retorted. "I am David Ritchie."

He changed before my eyes as he stared at me, and then, ere I knew it, he had me by both arms, crying out: —

"David Ritchie! My Davy — who ran away from me — and we were going to Kentucky together. Oh, I have never forgiven you," — the smile that there was no resisting belied his words as he put his face close to mine — "I never will forgive you. I might have known you — you've grown, but I vow you're still an old man, — Davy, you renegade. And where the devil did you run to?"

"Kentucky," I said, laughing.

"Oh, you traitor — and I trusted you. I loved you, Davy. Do you remember how I clung to you in my sleep? And when I woke up, the world was black. I followed your trail down the drive and to the cross-roads — "

"It was not ingratitude, Nick," I said; "you were all I had in the world." And then I faltered, the sadness of that far-off time coming over me in a flood, and the remembrance of his generous sorrow for me.

"And how the devil did you track me to the Widow Brown's?" he demanded, releasing me.

"A Mr. Jackson had a shrewd notion you were there. And by the way, he was in a fine temper because you had skipped a race with him."

"That sorrel-topped, lantern-headed Mr. Jackson?" said Nick. "He'll be killed in one of his fine tempers. Damn a man who can't keep his temper. I'll race him, of course. And where are you bound now, Davy?"

"For Louisville, in Kentucky, at the Falls of the Ohio. It is a growing place, and a promising one for a young man in the legal profession to begin life."

"When do you leave?" said he.

"To-morrow morning, Nick," said I. "You wanted once to go to Kentucky; why not come with me?"

His face clouded.

"I do not budge from this town," said he, "I do not budge until I hear that Jack Sevier is safe. Damn Cozby! If he had given me my way, we should have been forty miles from here by this. I'll tell you. Cozby is even now picking five men to go to Morganton and steal Sevier, and he puts me off with a kind word. He'll not have me, he says."

"He thinks you too hot. It needs discretion and an old head," said I.

"Egad, then, I'll commend you to him," said Nick.

"Now," I said, "it's time for you to tell me something of yourself, and how you chanced to come into this country."

"'Twas Darnley's fault," said Nick.

"Darnley!" I exclaimed; "he whom you got into the duel with —" I stopped abruptly, with a sharp twinge of remembrance that was like a pain in my side. 'Twas Nick took up the name.

"With Harry Riddle." He spoke quietly, that was the terrifying part of it. "David, I've looked for that man in Italy and France, I've scoured London for him, and, by God, I'll find him before he dies. And when I do find him I swear to you that there will be no such thing as time wasted, or mercy."

I shuddered. In all my life I had never known such a

moment of indecision. Should I tell him? My conscience would give me no definite reply. The question had haunted me all the night, and I had lost my way in consequence, nor had the morning's ride from the Widow Brown's sufficed to bring me to a decision. Of what use to tell him? Would Riddle's death mend matters? The woman loved him, that had been clear to me; yet, by telling Nick what I knew I might induce him to desist from his search, and if I did not tell, Nick might some day run across the trail, follow it up, take Riddle's life, and lose his own. The moment, made for confession as it was, passed.

"They have ruined my life," said Nick. "I curse him, and I curse her."

"Hold!" I cried; "she is your mother."

"And therefore I curse her the more," he said. "You know what she is, you've tasted of her charity, and you are my father's nephew. If you have been without experience, I will tell you what she is. A common —"

I reached out and put my hand across his mouth.

"Silence!" I cried; "you shall say no such thing. And have you not manhood enough to make your own life for yourself?"

"Manhood!" he repeated, and laughed. It was a laugh that I did not like. "They made a man of me, my parents. My father played false with the Rebels and fled to England for his reward. A year after he went I was left alone at Temple Bow to the tender mercies of the niggers. Mr. Mason came back and snatched what was left of me. He was a good man; he saved me an annuity out of the estate, he took me abroad after the war on a grand tour, and died of a fever in Rome. I made my way back to Charlestown, and there I learned to gamble, to hold liquor like a gentleman, to run horses and fight like a gentleman. We were speaking of Darnley," he said.

"Yes, of Darnley," I repeated.

"The devil of a man," said Nick; "do you remember him, with the cracked voice and fat calves?"

At any other time I should have laughed at the recollection.

"Darnley turned Whig, became a Continental colonel, and got a grant out here in the Cumberland country of three thousand acres. And now I own it."

"You own it!" I exclaimed.

"Rattle-and-snap," said Nick; "I played him for the land at the ordinary one night, and won it. It is out here near a place called Nashboro, where this wild, long-faced Mr. Jackson says he is going soon. I crossed the mountains to have a look at it, fell in with Nollichucky Jack, and went off with him for a summer campaign. There's a man for you, Davy," he cried, "a man to follow through hell-fire. If they touch a hair of his head we'll sack the State of North Carolina from Morganton to the sea."

"But the land?" I asked.

"Oh, a fig for the land," answered Nick; "as soon as Nollichucky Jack is safe I'll follow you into Kentucky." He slapped me on the knee. "Egad, Davy, it seems like a fairy tale. We always said we were going to Kentucky, didn't we? What is the name of the place you are to startle with your learning and calm by your example?"

"Louisville," I answered, laughing, "by the Falls of the Ohio."

"I shall turn up there when Jack Sevier is safe and I have won some more land from Mr. Jackson. We'll have a rare old time together, though I have no doubt you can drink me under the table. Beware of these sober men. Egad, Davy, you need only a woolsack to become a full-fledged judge. And now tell me how fortune has buffeted you."

It was my second night without sleep, for we sat burning candles in Mr. Wright's house until the dawn, making up the time which we had lost away from each other.

CHAPTER VII

I MEET A HERO

When left to myself, I was wont to slide into the commonplace; and where my own dull life intrudes to clog the action I cut it down here and pare it away there until I am merely explanatory, and not too much in evidence. I rode out the Wilderness Trail, fell in with other travellers, was welcomed by certain old familiar faces at Harrodstown, and pressed on. I have a vivid recollection of a beloved, vigorous figure swooping out of a cabin door and scattering a brood of children right and left. "Polly Ann!" I said, and she halted, trembling.

"Tom," she cried, "Tom, it's Davy come back;" and Tom himself flew out of the door, ramrod in one hand and rifle in the other. Never shall I forget them as they stood there, he grinning with sheer joy as of yore, and she, with her hair flying and her blue gown snapping in the wind, in a tremor between tears and laughter. I leaped to the ground, and she hugged me in her arms as though I had been a child, calling my name again and again, and little Tom pulling at the skirts of my coat. I caught the youngster by the collar.

"Polly Ann," said I, "he's grown to what I was when you picked me up, a foundling."

"And now it's little Davy no more," she answered, swept me a courtesy, and added, with a little quiver in her voice, "ye are a gentleman now."

"My heart is still where it was," said I.

"Ay, ay," said Tom, "I'm sure o' that, Davy."

I was with them a fortnight in the familiar cabin, and then I took up my journey northward, heavy at

leaving again, but promising to see them from time to time. For Tom was often at the Falls when he went a-scouting into the Illinois country. It was, as of old, Polly Ann who ran the mill and was the real breadwinner of the family.

Louisville was even then bursting with importance, and as I rode into it, one bright November day, I remembered the wilderness I had seen here not ten years gone when I had marched hither with Captain Harrod's company to join Clark on the island. It was even then a thriving little town of log and clapboard houses and schools and churches, and wise men were saying of it — what Colonel Clark had long ago predicted — that it would become the first city of commercial importance in the district of Kentucky.

I do not mean to give you an account of my struggles that winter to obtain a foothold in the law. The time was a heyday for young barristers, and troubles in those early days grew as plentifully in Kentucky as corn. In short, I got a practice, for Colonel Clark was here to help me, and, thanks to the men who had gone to Kaskaskia and Vincennes, I had a fairly large acquaintance in Kentucky. I hired rooms behind Mr. Crede's store, which was famed for the glass windows which had been fetched all the way from Philadelphia. Mr. Crede was the embodiment of the enterprising spirit of the place, and often of an evening he called me in to see the new fashionable things his barges had brought down the Ohio. The next day certain young sparks would drop into my room to waylay the belles as they came to pick a costume to be worn at Mr. Nickle's dancing school, or at the ball at Fort Finney.

The winter slipped away, and one cool evening in May there came a negro to my room with a note from Colonel Clark, bidding me sup with him at the tavern and meet a celebrity.

I put on my best blue clothes that I had brought with me from Richmond, and repaired expectantly to the tavern about eight of the clock, pushed through the curious

crowd outside, and entered the big room where the company was fast assembling. Against the red blaze in the great chimney-place I spied the figure of Colonel Clark, more portly than of yore, and beside him stood a gentleman who could be no other than General Wilkinson.

He was a man to fill the eye, handsome of face, symmetrical of figure, easy of manner, and he wore a suit of bottle-green that became him admirably. In short, so fascinated and absorbed was I in watching him as he greeted this man and the other that I started as though something had pricked me when I heard my name called by Colonel Clark.

"Come here, Davy," he cried across the room, and I came and stood abashed before the hero. "General, allow me to present to you the drummer boy of Kaskaskia and Vincennes, Mr. David Ritchie."

"I hear that you drummed them to victory through a very hell of torture, Mr. Ritchie," said the General. "It is an honor to grasp the hand of one who did such service at such a tender age."

General Wilkinson availed himself of that honor, and encompassed me with a smile so benignant, so winning in its candor, that I could only mutter my acknowledgment, and Colonel Clark must needs apologize, laughing, for my youth and timidity.

"Mr. Ritchie is not good at speeches, General," said he, "but I make no doubt he will drink a bumper to your health before we sit down. Gentlemen," he cried, filling his glass from a bottle on the table, "a toast to General Wilkinson, emancipator and saviour of Kentucky!"

The company responded with a shout, tossed off the toast, and sat down at the long table. Chance placed me between a young dandy from Lexington — one of several the General had brought in his train — and Mr. Wharton, a prominent planter of the neighborhood with whom I had a speaking acquaintance. This was a backwoods feast, though served in something better than the old backwoods style, and we had venison and bear's meat and prairie fowl as well as pork and beef, and breads that

came stinging hot from the Dutch ovens. Toasts to this and that were flung back and forth, and jests and gibes, and the butt of many of these was that poor Federal government which (as one gentleman avowed) was like a bantam hen trying to cover a nestful of turkey's eggs, and clucking with importance all the time. This picture brought on gusts of laughter.

"And what say you of the Jay?" cried one; "what will he hatch?"

Hisses greeted the name, for Mr. Jay wished to enter into a treaty with Spain, agreeing to close the river for five and twenty years. Colonel Clark stood up, and rapped on the table.

"Gentlemen," said he, "Louisville has as her guest of honor to-night a man of whom Kentucky may well be proud [loud cheering]. Five years ago he favored Lexington by making it his home, and he came to us with the laurel of former achievements still clinging to his brow. He fought and suffered for his country, and attained the honorable rank of Major in the Continental line. He was chosen by the people of Pennsylvania to represent them in the august body of their legislature, and now he has got new honor in a new field [renewed cheering]. He has come to Kentucky to show her the way to prosperity and glory. Kentucky had a grievance [loud cries of "Yes, yes!"]. Her hogs and cattle had no market, her tobacco and agricultural products of all kinds were rotting because the Spaniards had closed the Mississippi to our traffic. Could the Federal government open the river? [shouts of "No, no!" and hisses]. Who opened it? [cries of "Wilkinson, Wilkinson!"]. He said to the Kentucky planters, 'Give your tobacco to me, and I will sell it.' He put it in barges, he floated down the river, and, as became a man of such distinction, he was met by Governor-general Miro on the levee at New Orleans. Where is that tobacco now, gentlemen?" Colonel Clark was here interrupted by such roars and stamping that he paused a moment, and during this interval Mr. Wharton leaned over and whispered quietly in my ear: —

"Ay, where is it?"

I stared at Mr. Wharton blankly. He was a man nearing the middle age, with a lacing of red in his cheeks, a pleasant gray eye, and a singularly quiet manner.

"Thanks to the genius of General Wilkinson," Colonel Clark continued, waving his hand towards the smilingly placid hero, "that tobacco has been deposited in the King's store at ten dollars per hundred, — a privilege heretofore confined to Spanish subjects. Well might Wilkinson return from New Orleans in a chariot and four to a grateful Kentucky! This year we have tripled, nay, quadrupled, our crop of tobacco, and we are here to-night to give thanks to the author of this prosperity." Alas, Colonel Clark's hand was not as steady as of yore, and he spilled the liquor on the table as he raised his glass. "Gentlemen, a health to our benefactor."

They drank it willingly, and withal so lengthily and noisily that Mr. Wilkinson stood smiling and bowing for full three minutes before he could be heard. He was a very paragon of modesty, was the General, and a man whose attitudes and expressions spoke as eloquently as his words. None looked at him now but knew before he opened his mouth that he was deprecating such an ovation.

"Gentlemen, — my friends and fellow-Kentuckians," he said, "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kindness, but I assure you that I have done nothing worthy of it [loud protests]. I am a simple, practical man, who loves Kentucky better than he loves himself. This is no virtue, for we all have it. We have the misfortune to be governed by a set of worthy gentlemen who know little about Kentucky and her wants, and think less [cries of "Ay, ay!"]. I am not decrying General Washington and his cabinet; it is but natural that the wants of the seaboard and the welfare and opulence of the Eastern cities should be uppermost in their minds [another interruption]. Kentucky, if she would prosper, must look to her own welfare. And if any credit is due to me, gentlemen, it is because I reserved my decision of his Excellency, Governor-general Miro, and his people

until I saw them for myself. A little calm reason, a plain statement of the case, will often remove what seems an insuperable difficulty, and I assure you that Governor-general Miro is a most reasonable and courteous gentleman, who looks with all kindliness and neighborliness on the people of Kentucky. Let us drink a toast to him. To him your gratitude is due, for he sends you word that your tobacco will be received."

"In General Wilkinson's barges," said Mr. Wharton, leaning over and subsiding again at once.

The General was the first to drink the toast, and he sat down very modestly amidst a thunder of applause.

The young man on the other side of me, somewhat flushed, leaped to his feet.

"Down with the Federal government!" he cried; "what have they done for us, indeed? Before General Wilkinson went to New Orleans the Spaniards seized our flatboats and cargoes and flung our traders into prison, ay, and sent them to the mines of Brazil. The Federal government takes sides with the Indians against us. And what has that government done for you, Colonel?" he demanded, turning to Clark, "you who have won for them half of their territory? They have cast you off like an old moccasin. The Continental officers who fought in the East have half-pay for life or five years' full pay. And what have you?"

There was a breathless hush. A swift vision came to me of a man, young, alert, commanding, stern under necessity, self-repressed at all times — a man who by the very dominance of his character had awed into submission the fierce Northern tribes of a continent, who had compelled men to follow him until the life had all but ebbed from their bodies, who had led them to victory in the end. And I remembered a boy who had stood awe-struck before this man in the commandant's house at Fort Sackville. Ay, and I heard again his words as though he had just spoken them, "Promise me that you will not forget me if I am — unfortunate." I did not understand then. And now, because of a certain blinding of my eyes, I did not see him

clearly as he got slowly to his feet. He clutched the table. He looked around him — I dare not say — vacantly. And then, suddenly, he spoke with a supreme anger and a supreme bitterness.

"Not a shilling has this government given me," he cried. "Virginia was more grateful; from her I have some acres of wild land and — a sword." He laughed. "A sword, gentlemen, and not new at that. Oh, a grateful government we serve, one careful of the honor of her captains. Gentlemen, I stand to-day a discredited man because the honest debts I incurred in the service of that government are repudiated, because my friends who helped it, Father Gibault, Vigo, and Gratiot, and others have never been repaid. One of them is ruined."

A dozen men had sprung clamoring to their feet before he sat down. One, more excited than the rest, got the ear of the company.

"Do we lack leaders?" he cried. "We have them here with us to-night, in this room. Who will stop us? Not the contemptible enemies in Kentucky who call themselves Federalists. Shall we be supine forever? We have fought once for our liberties, let us fight again. Let us make a common cause with our real friends on the far side of the Mississippi."

I rose, sick at heart, but every man was standing. And then a strange thing happened. I saw General Wilkinson at the far end of the room; his hand was raised, and there was that on his handsome face which might have been taken for a smile, and yet was not a smile. Others saw him too, I know not by what exertion of magnetism. They looked at him and they held their tongues.

"I fear that we are losing our heads, gentlemen," he said; "and I propose to you the health of the first citizen of Kentucky, Colonel George Rogers Clark."

I found myself out of the tavern and alone in the cool May night. And as I walked slowly down the deserted street, my head in a whirl, a hand was laid on my shoulder. I turned, startled, to face Mr. Wharton, the planter.

"I would speak a word with you, Mr. Ritchie," he said. "May I come to your room for a moment?"

"Certainly, sir," I answered.

After that we walked along together in silence, my own mind heavily occupied with what I had seen and heard. We came to Mr. Crede's store, went in at the picket gate beside it and down the path to my own door, which I unlocked. I felt for the candle on the table, lighted it, and turned in surprise to discover that Mr. Wharton was poking up the fire and pitching on a log of wood. He flung off his greatcoat and sat down with his feet to the blaze. I sat down beside him and waited, thinking him a sufficiently peculiar man.

"You are not famous, Mr. Ritchie," said he, presently.

"No, sir," I answered.

"Nor particularly handsome," he continued, "nor conspicuous in any way."

I agreed to this, perforce.

"You may thank God for it," said Mr. Wharton.

"That would be a strange outpouring, sir," said I.

He looked at me and smiled.

"What think you of this paragon, General Wilkinson?" he demanded suddenly.

"I have Federal leanings, sir," I answered.

"Egad," said he, "we'll add caution to your lack of negative accomplishments. I have had an eye on you this winter, though you did not know it. I have made inquiries about you, and hence I am not here to-night entirely through impulse. You have not made a fortune at the law, but you have worked hard, steered wide of sensation, kept your mouth shut. Is it not so?"

Astonished, I merely nodded in reply.

"I am not here to waste your time or steal your sleep," he went on, giving the log a push with his foot, "and I will come to the point. When I first laid eyes on this fine gentleman, General Wilkinson, I too fell a victim to his charms. It was on the eve of this epoch-making trip of which we heard so glowing an account to-night, and I

made up my mind that no Spaniard, however wily, could resist his persuasion. He said to me, 'Wharton, give me your crop of tobacco and I promise you to sell it in spite of all the royal mandates that go out of Madrid.' He went, he saw, he conquered the obdurate Miro as he has apparently conquered the rest of the world, and he actually came back in a chariot and four as befitted him. A heavy crop of tobacco was raised in Kentucky that year. I helped to raise it," added Mr. Wharton, dryly. "I gave the General my second crop, and he sent it down. Mr. Ritchie, I have to this day never received a *piastre* for my merchandise, nor am I the only planter in this situation. Yet General Wilkinson is prosperous."

My astonishment somewhat prevented me from replying to this, too. Was it possible that Mr. Wharton meant to sue the General? I reflected while he paused. I remembered how inconspicuous he had named me, and hope died. Mr. Wharton did not look at me, but stared into the fire, for he was plainly not a man to rail and rant.

"Mr. Ritchie, you are young, but mark my words, that man Wilkinson will bring Kentucky to ruin if he is not found out. The whole district from Crab Orchard to Bear Grass is mad about him. Even Clark makes a fool of himself —"

"Colonel Clark, sir!" I cried.

He put up a hand.

"So you have some hot blood," he said. "I know you love him. So do I, or I should not have been there tonight. Do I blame his bitterness? Do I blame — anything he does? The treatment he has had would bring a blush of shame to the cheek of any nation save a republic. Republics are wasteful, sir. In George Rogers Clark they have thrown away a general who might some day have decided the fate of this country, they have left to stagnate a man fit to lead a nation to war. And now he is ready to intrigue against the government with any adventurer who may have convincing ways and a smooth tongue."

"Mr. Wharton," I said, rising, "did you come here to tell me this?"

But Mr. Wharton continued to stare into the fire.

"I like you the better for it, my dear sir," said he, "and I assure you that I mean no offence. Colonel Clark is enshrined in our hearts, Democrats and Federalists alike. Whatever he may do, we shall love him always. But this other man, — pooh!" he exclaimed, which was as near a vigorous expression as he got. "Now, sir, to the point. I, too, am a Federalist, a friend of Mr. Humphrey Marshall, and, as you know, we are sadly in the minority in Kentucky now. I came here to-night to ask you to undertake a mission in behalf of myself and certain other gentlemen, and I assure you that my motives are not wholly mercenary." He paused, smiled, and put the tips of his fingers together. "I would willingly lose every crop for the next ten years to convict this Wilkinson of treason against the Federal government."

"Treason!" I repeated involuntarily.

"Mr. Ritchie," answered the planter, "I gave you credit for some shrewdness. Do you suppose the Federal government does not realize the danger of this situation in Kentucky. They have tried in vain to open the Mississippi, and are too weak to do it. This man Wilkinson goes down to see Miro, and Miro straightway opens the river to us through him. How do you suppose Wilkinson did it? By his charming personality?"

I said something, I know not what, as the light began to dawn on me. And then I added, "I had not thought about the General."

"Ah," replied Mr. Wharton, "just so. And now you may easily imagine that General Wilkinson has come to a very pretty arrangement with Miro. For a certain stipulated sum best known to Wilkinson and Miro, General Wilkinson agrees gradually to detach Kentucky from the Union and join it to his Catholic Majesty's dominion of Louisiana. The bribe — the opening of the river. What the government could not do Wilkinson did by the lifting of his finger."

Still Mr. Wharton spoke without heat.

"Mind you," he said, "we have no proof of this, and

that is my reason for coming here to-night, Mr. Ritchie. I want you to get proof of it if you can."

"You want me —" I said, bewildered.

"I repeat that you are not handsome," — I think he emphasized this unduly, — "that you are self-effacing, inconspicuous; in short, you are not a man to draw suspicion. You might travel anywhere and scarcely be noticed, — I have observed that about you. In addition to this you are wary, you are discreet, you are painstaking. I ask you to go first to St. Louis, in Louisiana territory, and this for two reasons. First, because it will draw any chance suspicion from your real objective, New Orleans; and second, because it is necessary to get letters to New Orleans from such leading citizens of St. Louis as Colonel Chouteau and Monsieur Gratiot, and I will give you introductions to them. You are then to take passage to New Orleans in a barge of furs which Monsieur Gratiot is sending down. Mind, we do not expect that you will obtain proof that Miro is paying Wilkinson money. If you do, so much the better; but we believe that both are too sharp to leave any tracks. You will make a report, however, upon the conditions under which our tobacco is being received, and of all other matters which you may think germane to the business in hand. Will you go?"

I had made up my mind.

"Yes, I will go," I answered.

"Good," said Mr. Wharton, but with no more enthusiasm than he had previously shown; "I thought I had not misjudged you. Is your law business so onerous that you could not go to-morrow?"

I laughed.

"I think I could settle what affairs I have by noon, Mr. Wharton," I replied.

"Egad, Mr. Ritchie, I like your manner," said he; "and now for a few details, and you may go to bed."

He sat with me half an hour longer, carefully reviewing his instructions, and then he left me to a night of contemplation.

CHAPTER VIII

TO ST. LOUIS

By eleven o'clock the next morning I had wound up my affairs, having arranged with a young lawyer of my acquaintance to take over such cases as I had, and I was busy in my room packing my saddle-bags for the journey. The warm scents of spring were wafted through the open door and window, smells of the damp earth giving forth the green things, and tender shades greeted my eyes when I paused and raised my head to think. Purple buds littered the black ground before my door-step, and against the living green of the grass I saw the red stain of a robin's breast as he hopped spasmodically hither and thither, now pausing immovable with his head raised, now tossing triumphantly a wriggling worm from the sod. Suddenly he flew away, and I heard a voice from the street side that brought me stark upright.

"Hold there, neighbor; can you direct me to the mansion of that celebrated barrister, Mr. Ritchie?"

There was no mistaking that voice — it was Nicholas Temple's. I heard a laugh and an answer, the gate slammed, and Mr. Temple himself in a long gray riding-coat, booted and spurred, stood before me.

"Davy," he cried, "come out here and hug me. Why, you look as if I were your grandmother's ghost."

"And if you were," I answered, "you could not have surprised me more. Where have you been?"

"At Jonesboro, acting the gallant with the widow, winning and losing skins and cow-bells and land at rattle-and-snap, horse-racing with that wild Mr. Jackson. Faith, he near shot the top of my head off because I beat him at Greasy Cove."

I laughed, despite my anxiety.

"And Sevier?" I demanded.

"You have not heard how Sevier got off?" exclaimed Nick. "Egad, that was a crowning stroke of genius! Cozby and Evans, Captains Greene and Gibson, and Sevier's two boys whom you met on the Nollichucky rode over the mountains to Morganton. Greene and Gibson and Sevier's boys hid themselves with the horses in a clump outside the town, while Cozby and Evans, disguised as bumpkins in hunting shirts, jogged into the town with Sevier's racing mare between them. They jogged into the town, I say, through the crowds of white trash, and rode up to the court-house where Sevier was being tried for his life. Evans stood at the open door and held the mare and gaped, while Cozby stalked in and shouldered his way to the front within four feet of the bar, like a big, awkward countryman. Jack Sevier saw him, and he saw Evans with the mare outside. Then, by thunder, Cozby takes a step right up to the bar and cries out, 'Judge, aren't you about done with that man?' Faith, it was like judgment day, such a mix-up as there was after that, and Nollichucky Jack made three leaps and got on the mare, and in the confusion Cozby and Evans were off too, and the whole State of North Carolina couldn't catch 'em then." Nick sighed. "I'd have given my soul to have been there," he said.

"Come in," said I, for lack of something better.

"Cursed if you haven't given me a sweet reception, Davy," said he. "Have you lost your practice, or is there a lady here, you rogue," and he poked into the cupboard with his stick. "Hullo, where are you going now?" he added, his eye falling on the saddle-bags.

I had it on my lips to say, and then I remembered Mr. Wharton's injunction.

"I'm going on a journey," said I.

"When?" said Nick.

"I leave in about an hour," said I.

He sat down. "Then I leave too," he said.

"What do you mean, Nick?" I demanded.

"I mean that I will go with you," said he.

"But I shall be gone three months or more," I protested.

"I have nothing to do," said Nick, placidly.

A vague trouble had been working in my mind, but now the full horror of it dawned upon me. I was going to St. Louis. Mrs. Temple and Harry Riddle were gone there, so Polly Ann had avowed, and Nick could not help meeting Riddle. Sorely beset, I bent over to roll up a shirt, and refrained from answering.

He came and laid a hand on my shoulder.

"What the devil ails you, Davy?" he cried. "If it is an elopement, of course I won't press you. I'm hanged if I'll make a third."

"It is no elopement," I retorted, my face growing hot in spite of myself.

"Then I go with you," said he, "for I vow you need taking care of. You can't put me off, I say. But never in my life have I had such a reception, and from my own first cousin, too."

I was in a quandary, so totally unforeseen was this situation. And then a glimmer of hope came to me that perhaps his mother and Riddle might not be in St. Louis after all. I recalled the conversation in the cabin, and reflected that this wayward pair had stranded on so many beaches, had drifted off again on so many tides, that one place could scarce hold them long. Perchance they had sunk, — who could tell? I turned to Nick, who stood watching me.

"It was not that I did not want you," I said, "you must believe that. I have wanted you ever since that night long ago when I slipped out of your bed and ran away. I am going first to St. Louis and then to New Orleans on a mission of much delicacy, a mission that requires discretion and secrecy. You may come, with all my heart, with one condition only — that you do not ask my business."

"Done!" cried Nick. "Davy, I was always sure of you; you are the one fixed quantity in my life. To St. Louis, eh, and to New Orleans? Egad, what havoc we'll

make among the Creole girls. May I bring my nigger? He'll do things for you too."

"By all means," said I, laughing, "only hurry."

"I'll run to the inn," said Nick, "and be back in ten minutes." He got as far as the door, slapped his thigh, and looked back. "Davy, we may run across — "

"Who?" I asked, with a catch of my breath.

"Harry Riddle," he answered; "and if so, may God have mercy on his soul!"

He ran down the path, the gate clicked, and I heard him whistling in the street on his way to the inn.

After dinner we rode down to the ferry, Nick on the thoroughbred which had beat Mr. Jackson's horse, and his man, Benjy, on a scraggly pony behind. Benjy was a small, black negro with a very squat nose, alert and talkative save when Nick turned on him. Benjy had been born at Temple Bow; he worshipped his master and all that pertained to him, and he showered upon me all the respect and attention that was due to a member of the Temple family. For this I was very grateful. It would have been an easier journey had we taken a boat down to Fort Massac, but such a proceeding might have drawn too much attention to our expedition. I have no space to describe that trip overland, which reminded me at every stage of the march against Kaskaskia, the woods, the chocolate streams, the coffee-colored swamps flecked with dead leaves, — and at length the prairies, the grass not waist-high now, but young and tender, giving forth the acrid smell of spring. Nick was delighted. He made me recount every detail of my trials as a drummer boy, or kept me in continuous spells of laughter over his own escapades. In short, I began to realize that we were as near to each other as though we had never been parted.

We looked down upon Kaskaskia from the self-same spot where I had stood on the bluff with Colonel Clark, and the sounds were even then the same, — the sweet tones of the church bell and the lowing of the cattle. We found a few Virginians and Pennsylvanians scattered in amongst the French, the forerunners of that change which

was to come over this country. And we spent the night with my old friend, Father Gibault, still the faithful pastor of his flock; cheerful, though the savings of his lifetime had never been repaid by that country to which he had given his allegiance so freely. Travelling by easy stages, on the afternoon of the second day after leaving Kaskaskia we picked our way down the high bluff that rises above the American bottom, and saw below us that yellow monster among the rivers, the Mississippi. A blind monster he seemed, searching with troubled arms among the islands for his bed, swept onward by an inexorable force, and on his heaving shoulders he carried great trees pilfered from the unknown forests of the North.

Down in the moist and shady bottom we came upon the log hut of a half-breed trapper, and he agreed to ferry us across. As for our horses, a keel boat must be sent after these, and Monsieur Gratiot would no doubt easily arrange for this. And so we found ourselves, about five o'clock on that Saturday evening, embarked in a wide pirogue on the current, dodging the driftwood, avoiding the eddies, and drawing near to a village set on a low bluff on the Spanish side and gleaming white among the trees. And as I looked, the thought came again like a twinge of pain that Mrs. Temple and Riddle might be there, thinking themselves secure in this spot, so removed from the world and its doings.

"How now, my man of mysterious affairs?" cried Nick, from the bottom of the boat; "you are as puckered as a sour persimmon. Have you a treaty with Spain in your pocket or a declaration of war? What can trouble you?"

"Nothing, if you do not," I answered, smiling.

"Lord send we don't admire the same lady, then," said Nick. "Pierrot," he cried, turning to one of the boatmen, "*il y a des belles demoiselles là, n'est-ce pas?*"

The man missed a stroke in his astonishment, and the boat swung lengthwise in the swift current.

"*Dame, Monsieur, il y en a,*" he answered.

"Where did you learn French, Nick?" I demanded.

"Mr. Mason had it hammered into me," he answered

carelessly, his eyes on the line of keel boats moored along the shore. Our guides shot the canoe deftly between two of these, the prow grounded in the yellow mud, and we landed on Spanish territory.

We looked about us while our packs were being unloaded, and the place had a strange flavor in that year of our Lord, 1789. A swarthy boatman in a tow shirt with a bright handkerchief on his head stared at us over the gunwale of one of the keel boats, and spat into the still, yellow water; three high-cheeked Indians, with smudgy faces and dirty red blankets, regarded us in silent contempt; and by the water-side above us was a sled loaded with a huge water cask, a bony mustang pony between the shafts, and a chanting negro dipping gourdfuls from the river. A road slanted up the little limestone bluff, and above and below us stone houses could be seen nestling into the hill, houses higher on the river side, and with galleries there. We climbed the bluff, Benjy at our heels with the saddle-bags, and found ourselves on a yellow-clay street lined with grass and wild flowers. A great peace hung over the village, an air of a different race, a restfulness strange to a Kentuckian. Clematis and honeysuckle climbed the high palings, and behind the privacy of these, low, big-chimneyed houses of limestone, weathered gray, could be seen, their roofs sloping in gentle curves to the shaded porches in front; or again, houses of posts set upright in the ground and these filled between with plaster, and so immaculately whitewashed that they gleamed against the green of the trees which shaded them. Behind the houses was often a kind of pink-and-cream paradise of flowering fruit trees, so dear to the French settlers. There were vineyards, too, and thrifty patches of vegetables, and lines of flowers set in the carefully raked mould.

We walked on, enraptured by the sights around us, by the heavy scent of the roses and the blossoms. Here was a quaint stone horse-mill, a stable, or a barn set uncouthly on the street; a baker's shop, with a glimpse of the white-capped baker through the shaded doorway, and an appetiz-

ing smell of hot bread in the air. A little farther on we heard the tinkle of the blacksmith's hammer, and the man himself looked up from where the hoof rested on his leather apron to give us a kindly "*Bon soir, Messieurs,*" as we passed. And here was a cabaret, with the inevitable porch, from whence came the sharp click of billiard balls.

We walked on, stopping now and again to peer between the palings, when we heard, amidst the rattling of a cart and the jingling of bells, a chorus of voices : —

> "*À cheval, à cheval, pour aller voir ma mie,*
> *Lon, lon, la!*"

A shaggy Indian pony came ambling around the corner between the long shafts of a charette. A bareheaded young man in tow shirt and trousers was driving, and three laughing girls were seated on the stools in the cart behind him. Suddenly, before I quite realized what had happened, the young man pulled up the pony, the girls fell silent, and Nick was standing in the middle of the road, with his hat in his hand, bowing elaborately.

"*Je vous salue, Mesdemoiselles,*" he cried, "*mes anges à char-à-banc. Pouvez-vous me diriger chez Monsieur Gratiot?*"

"*Sapristi!*" exclaimed the young man, but he laughed. The young women stood up, giggling, and peered at Nick over the young man's shoulder. One of them wore a fresh red-and-white calamanco gown. She had a complexion of ivory tinged with red, raven hair, and dusky, long-lashed, mischievous eyes brimming with merriment.

"*Volontiers, Monsieur,*" she answered, before the others could catch their breath, "*première droite et première gauche. Allons, Gaspard!*" she cried, tapping the young man sharply on the shoulder, "*es tu fou?*"

Gaspard came to himself, flicked the pony, and they went off down the road with shouts of laughter, while Nick stood waving his hat until they turned the corner.

"Egad," said he, "I'd take to the highway if I could be sure of holding up such a cargo every time. Off with you, Benjy, and find out where she lives," he cried;

and the obedient Benjy dropped the saddle-bags as though such commands were not uncommon.

"Pick up those bags, Benjy," said I, laughing.

Benjy glanced uncertainly at his master.

"Do as I tell you, you black scalawag," said Nick, "or I'll tan you. What are you waiting for?"

"Marse Dave —" began Benjy, rolling his eyes in discomfiture.

"Look you, Nick Temple," said I, "when you shipped with me you promised that I should command. I can't afford to have the town about our ears."

"Oh, very well, if you put it that way," said Nick. "A little honest diversion — Pick up the bags, Benjy, and follow the parson."

Obeying Mademoiselle's directions, we trudged on until we came to a comfortable stone house surrounded by trees and set in a half-block bordered by a seven-foot paling. Hardly had we opened the gate when a tall gentleman of grave demeanor and sober dress rose from his seat on the porch, and I recognized my friend of Cahokia days, Monsieur Gratiot. He was a little more portly, his hair was dressed now in an eelskin, and he looked every inch the man of affairs that he was. He greeted us kindly and bade us come up on the porch, where he read my letter of introduction.

"Why," he exclaimed immediately, giving me a cordial grasp of the hand, "of course. The strategist, the John Law, the reader of character of Colonel Clark's army. Yes, and worse, the prophet, Mr. Ritchie."

"And why worse, sir?" I asked.

"You predicted that Congress would never repay me for the little loan I advanced to your Colonel."

"It was not such a little loan, Monsieur," I said.

"*N'importe*," said he; "I went to Richmond with my box of scrip and promissory notes, but I was not ill repaid. If I did not get my money, I acquired, at least, a host of distinguished acquaintances. But, Mr. Ritchie, you must introduce me to your friend."

"My cousin, Mr. Nicholas Temple," I said.

Monsieur Gratiot looked at him fixedly.

"Of the Charlestown Temples?" he asked, and a sudden vague fear seized me.

"Yes," said Nick, "there was once a family of that name."

"And now?" said Monsieur Gratiot, puzzled.

"Now," said Nick, "now they are become a worthless lot of refugees and outlaws, who by good fortune have escaped the gallows."

Before Monsier Gratiot could answer, a child came running around the corner of the house and stood, surprised, staring at us. Nick made a face, stooped down, and twirled his finger. Shouting with a terrified glee, the boy fled to the garden path, Nick after him.

"I like Mr. Temple," said Monsieur Gratiot, smiling. "He is young, but he seems to have had a history."

"The Revolution ruined many families — his was one," I answered, with what firmness of tone I could muster. And then Nick came back, carrying the shouting youngster on his shoulders. At that instant a lady appeared in the doorway, leading another child, and we were introduced to Madame Gratiot.

"Gentlemen," said Monsieur Gratiot, "you must make my house your home. I fear your visit will not be as long as I could wish, Mr. Ritchie," he added, turning to me, "if Mr. Wharton correctly states your business. I have an engagement to have my furs in New Orleans by a certain time. I am late in loading, and as there is a moon I am sending off my boats to-morrow night. The men will have to work on Sunday."

"We were fortunate to come in such good season," I answered.

After a delicious supper of gumbo, a Creole dish, of fricassee, of *crême brûlé*, of red wine and fresh wild strawberries, we sat on the porch. The crickets chirped in the garden, the moon cast fantastic shadows from the pecan tree on the grass, while Nick, struggling with his French, talked to Madame Gratiot; and now and then their gay laughter made Monsieur Gratiot pause and smile as he talked to me of my errand. It seemed strange

to me that a man who had lost so much by his espousal of our cause should still be faithful to the American republic. Although he lived in Louisiana, he had never renounced the American allegiance which he had taken at Cahokia. He regarded with no favor the pretensions of Spain toward Kentucky. And (remarkably enough) he looked forward even then to the day when Louisiana would belong to the republic. I exclaimed at this.

"Mr. Ritchie," said he, "the most casual student of your race must come to the same conclusion. You have seen for yourself how they have overrun and conquered Kentucky and the Cumberland districts, despite a hideous warfare waged by all the tribes Your people will not be denied, and when they get to Louisiana, they will take it, as they take everything else."

He was a man strong in argument, was Monsieur Gratiot, for he loved it. And he beat me fairly.

"Nay," he said finally, "Spain might as well try to dam the Mississippi as to dam your commerce on it. As for France, I love her, though my people were exiled to Switzerland by the Edict of Nantes. But France is rotten through the prodigality of her kings and nobles, and she cannot hold Louisiana. The kingdom is sunk in debt." He cleared his throat. "As for this Wilkinson of whom you speak, I know something of him. I have no doubt that Miro pensions him, but I know Miro likewise, and you will obtain no proof of that. You will, however, discover in New Orleans many things of interest to your government and to the Federal party in Kentucky. Colonel Chouteau and I will give you letters to certain French gentlemen in New Orleans who can be trusted. There is Saint-Gré, for instance, who puts a French Louisiana into his prayers. He has never forgiven O'Reilly and his Spaniards for the murder of his father in sixty-nine. Saint-Gré is a good fellow, — a cousin of the present Marquis in France, — and his ancestors held many positions of trust in the colony under the French régime. He entertains lavishly at *Les Îles*, his plantation on the Mississippi. He has the gossip of New Orleans at his

tongue's tip, and you will be suspected of nothing save a desire to amuse yourselves if you go there." He paused, interrupted by the laughter of the others. "When strangers of note or of position drift here and pass on to New Orleans, I always give them letters to Saint-Gré. He has a charming daughter and a worthless son."

Monsieur Gratiot produced his tabatière and took a pinch of snuff. I summoned my courage for the topic which had trembled all the evening on my lips.

"Some years ago, Monsieur Gratiot, a lady and a gentleman were rescued on the Wilderness Trail in Kentucky. They left us for St. Louis. Did they come here?"

Monsieur Gratiot leaned forward quickly.

"They were people of quality?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"And their name?"

"They — they did not say."

"It must have been the Clives," he cried; "it can have been no other. Tell me — a woman still beautiful, commanding, of perhaps eight and thirty? A woman who had a sorrow? — a great sorrow, though we have never learned it. And Mr. Clive, a man of fashion, ill content too, and pining for the life of a capital?"

"Yes," I said eagerly, my voice sinking near to a whisper, "yes — it is they. And are they here?"

Monsieur Gratiot took another pinch of snuff. It seemed an age before he answered: —

"It is curious that you should mention them, for I gave them letters to New Orleans, — amongst others, to Saint-Gré. Mrs. Clive was — what shall I say? — haunted. Monsieur Clive talked of nothing but Paris, where they had lived once. And at last she gave in. They have gone there."

"To Paris?" I said, taking breath.

"Yes. It is more than a year ago," he continued, seeming not to notice my emotion; "they went by way of New Orleans, in one of Chouteau's boats."

CHAPTER IX

"CHERCHEZ LA FEMME"

SUNDAY came with the soft haziness of a June morning, and the dew sucked a fresh fragrance from the blossoms and the grass. I looked out of our window at the orchard, all pink and white in the early sun, and across a patch of clover to the stone kitchen. A pearly, feathery smoke was wafted from the chimney, a delicious aroma of Creole coffee pervaded the odor of the blossoms, and a cotton-clad negro *à pieds nus* came down the path with two steaming cups and knocked at our door. He who has tasted Creole coffee will never forget it. The effect of it was lost upon Nick, for he laid down the cup, sighed, and promptly went to sleep again, while I dressed and went forth to make his excuses to the family. I found Monsieur and Madame with their children walking among the flowers. Madame laughed.

"He is charming, your cousin," said she. "Let him sleep, by all means, until after Mass. Then you must come with us to Madame Chouteau's, my mother's. Her children and grandchildren dine with her every Sunday."

"Madame Chouteau, my mother-in-law, is the queen regent of St. Louis, Mr. Ritchie," said Monsieur Gratiot, gayly. "We are all afraid of her, and I warn you that she is a very determined and formidable personage. She is the widow of the founder of St. Louis, the Sieur Laclède, although she prefers her own name. She rules us with a strong hand, dispenses justice, settles disputes, and — sometimes indulges in them herself. It is her right."

"You will see a very pretty French custom of submission to parents," said Madame Gratiot. "And afterwards there is a ball."

"A ball!" I exclaimed involuntarily.

"It may seem very strange to you, Mr. Ritchie, but we believe that Sunday was made to enjoy. They will have time to attend the ball before you send them down the river?" she added mischievously, turning to her husband.

"Certainly," said he; "the loading will not be finished before eight o'clock."

Presently Madame Gratiot went off to Mass, while I walked with Monsieur Gratiot to a storehouse near the river's bank, whence the skins, neatly packed and numbered, were being carried to the boats on the sweating shoulders of the negroes, the half-breeds, and the Canadian boatmen, — bulky bales of yellow elk, from the upper plains of the Missouri, of buffalo and deer and bear, and priceless little packages of the otter and the beaver trapped in the green shade of the endless Northern forests, and brought hither in pirogues down the swift river by the red tribesmen and Canadian adventurers.

Afterwards I strolled about the silent village. Even the cabarets were deserted. A private of the Spanish Louisiana Regiment in a dirty uniform slouched behind the palings in front of the commandant's quarters, — a quaint stone house set against the hill, with dormer windows in its curving roof, with a wide porch held by eight sturdy hewn pillars; here and there the muffled figure of a prowling Indian loitered, or a barefooted negress shuffled along by the fence crooning a folk-song. All the world had obeyed the call of the church bell save these — and Nick. I bethought myself of Nick, and made my way back to Monsieur Gratiot's.

I found my cousin railing at Benjy, who had extracted from the saddle-bags a wondrous gray suit of London cut in which to array his master. Clothes became Nick's slim figure remarkably. This coat was cut away smartly, like a uniform, towards the tails, and was brought in at the waist with an infinite art.

"Whither now, my *conquistador?*" I said.

"To Mass," said he.

"To Mass!" I exclaimed; "but you have slept through the greater part of it."

"The best part is to come," said Nick, giving a final touch to his neck-band. Followed by Benjy's adoring eyes, he started out of the door, and I followed him perforce. We came to the little church, of upright logs and plaster, with its crudely shingled, peaked roof, with its tiny belfry crowned by a cross, with its porches on each side shading the line of windows there. Beside the church, a little at the back, was the curé's modest house of stone, and at the other hand, under spreading trees, the graveyard with its rough wooden crosses. And behind these graves rose the wooded hill that stretched away towards the wilderness.

What a span of life had been theirs who rested here! Their youth, perchance, had been spent amongst the crooked streets of some French village, streets lined by red-tiled houses and crossing limpid streams by quaint bridges. Death had overtaken them beside a monster tawny river of which their imaginations had not conceived, a river which draws tribute from the remote places of an unknown land, — a river, indeed, which, mixing all the waters, seemed to symbolize a coming race which was to conquer the land by its resistless flow, even as the Mississippi bore relentlessly towards the sea.

These were my own thoughts as I listened to the tones of the priest as they came, droningly, out of the door, while Nick was exchanging jokes in doubtful French with some half-breeds leaning against the palings. Then we heard benches scraping on the floor, and the congregation began to file out.

Those who reached the steps gave back, respectfully, and there came an elderly lady in a sober turban, a black mantilla wrapped tightly about her shoulders, and I made no doubt that she was Monsieur Gratiot's mother-in-law, Madame Chouteau, she whom he had jestingly called the queen regent. I was sure of this when I saw Madame Gratiot behind her. Madame Chouteau indeed had the face of authority, a high-bridged nose, a determined chin,

a mouth that shut tightly. Madame Gratiot presented us to her mother, and as she passed on to the gate Madame Chouteau reminded us that we were to dine with her at two.

After her the congregation, the well-to-do and the poor alike, poured out of the church and spread in merry groups over the grass: keel boatmen in tow shirts and party-colored worsted belts, the blacksmith, the shoemaker, the farmer of a small plot in the common fields in large cotton pantaloons and light-wove camlet coat, the more favored in skull-caps, linen small-clothes, cotton stockings, and silver-buckled shoes, — every man pausing, dipping into his tabatière, for a word with his neighbor. The women, too, made a picture strange to our eyes, the matrons in jacket and petticoat, a Madras handkerchief flung about their shoulders, the girls in fresh cottonade or calamanco.

All at once cries of "'Polyte! 'Polyte!" were heard, and a nimble young man with a jester-like face hopped around the corner of the church, trundling a barrel. Behind 'Polyte came two rotund little men perspiring freely, and laden down with various articles, — a bird-cage with two yellow birds, a hat-trunk, an inlaid card box, a roll of scarlet cloth, and I know not what else. They deposited these on the grass beside the barrel, which 'Polyte had set on end and proceeded to mount, encouraged by the shouts of his friends, who pressed around the barrel.

"It's an auction," I said.

But Nick did not hear me. I followed his glance to the far side of the circle, and my eye was caught by a red ribbon, a blush that matched it. A glance shot from underneath long lashes, — but not for me. Beside the girl, and palpably uneasy, stood the young man who had been called Gaspard.

"Ah," said I, "your angel of the tumbrel."

But Nick had pulled off his hat and was sweeping her a bow. The girl looked down, smoothing her ribbon, Gaspard took a step forward, and other young women near us tittered with delight. The voice of Hippolyte rolling his r's called out in a French dialect: —

"*M'ssieurs et Mesdames, ce sont des effets d'un pauvre officier qui est mort.* Who will buy?" He opened the hat-trunk, produced an antiquated beaver with a gold cord, and surveyed it with a covetousness that was admirably feigned. For 'Polyte was an actor. "M'ssieurs, to own such a hat were a patent of nobility. Am I bid twenty livres?"

There was a loud laughter, and he was bid four.

"Gaspard," cried the auctioneer, addressing the young man of the tumbrel, "Suzanne would no longer hesitate if she saw you in such a hat. And with the trunk, too. Ah, *mon Dieu*, can you afford to miss it?"

The crowd howled, Suzanne simpered, and Gaspard turned as pink as clover. But he was not to be bullied. The hat was sold to an elderly person, the red cloth likewise; a pot of grease went to a housewife, and there was a veritable scramble for the box of playing cards; and at last Hippolyte held up the wooden cage with the fluttering yellow birds.

"Ha!" he cried, his eyes on Gaspard once more, "a gentle present—a present to make a heart relent. And Monsieur Léon, perchance you will make a bid, although they are not gamecocks."

Instantly, from somewhere under the barrel, a cock crew. Even the yellow birds looked surprised, and as for 'Polyte, he nearly dropped the cage. One elderly person crossed himself. I looked at Nick. His face was impassive, but suddenly I remembered his boyhood gift, how he had imitated the monkeys, and I began to shake with inward laughter. There was an uncomfortable silence.

"*Peste, c'est la magie!*" said an old man at last, searching with an uncertain hand for his snuff.

"Monsieur," cried Nick to the auctioneer, "I will make a bid. But first you must tell me whether they are cocks or yellow birds."

"*Parbleu*," answered the puzzled Hippolyte, "that I do not know, Monsieur."

Everybody looked at Nick, including Suzanne.

"Very well," said he, "I will make a bid. And if they

turn out to be gamecocks, I will fight them with Monsieur Léon behind the cabaret. Two livres!"

There was a laugh, as of relief.

"Three!" cried Gaspard, and his voice broke.

Hippolyte looked insulted.

"*M'ssieurs*," he shouted, "they are from the Canaries. *Diable, un berger doit être généreux.*"

Another laugh, and Gaspard wiped the perspiration from his face.

"Five!" said he.

"Six!" said Nick, and the villagers turned to him in wonderment. What could such a fine Monsieur want with two yellow birds?

"*En avant*, Gaspard," said Hippolyte, and Suzanne shot another barbed glance in our direction.

"Seven," muttered Gaspard.

"Eight!" said Nick, immediately.

"Nine," said Gaspard.

"Ten," said Nick.

"Ten," cried Hippolyte, "I am offered ten livres for the yellow birds. *Une bagatelle! Onze, Gaspard! Onze! onze livres, pour l'amour de Suzanne!*"

But Gaspard was silent. No appeals, entreaties, or taunts could persuade him to bid more. And at length Hippolyte, with a gesture of disdain, handed Nick the cage, as though he were giving it away.

"Monsieur," he said, "the birds are yours, since there are no more lovers who are worthy of the name. They do not exist."

"Monsieur," answered Nick, "it is to disprove that statement that I have bought the birds. Mademoiselle," he added, turning to the flushing Suzanne, "I pray that you will accept this present with every assurance of my humble regard."

Mademoiselle took the cage, and amidst the laughter of the village at the discomfiture of poor Gaspard, swept Nick a frightened courtesy, — one that nevertheless was full of coquetry. And at that instant, to cap the situation, a rotund little man with a round face under a linen biretta

grasped Nick by the hand, and cried in painful but sincere English: —

"Monsieur, you mek my daughter ver' happy. She want those bird ever sence Captain Lopez he die. Monsieur, I am Jean Baptiste Lenoir, Colonel Chouteau's miller, and we ver' happy to see you at the pon'."

"If Monsieur will lead the way," said Nick, instantly, taking the little man by the arm.

"But you are to dine at Madame Chouteau's," I expostulated.

"To be sure," said he. "*Au revoir, Monsieur. Au revoir, Mademoiselle. Plus tard, Mademoiselle; nous danserons plus tard.*"

"What devil inhabits you?" I said, when I had got him started on the way to Madame Chouteau's.

"Your own, at present, Davy," he answered, laying a hand on my shoulder, "else I should be on the way to the pon' with Lenoir. But the ball is to come," and he executed several steps in anticipation. "Davy, I am sorry for you."

"Why?" I demanded, though feeling a little self-commiseration also.

"You will never know how to enjoy yourself," said he, with conviction.

Madame Chouteau lived in a stone house, wide and low, surrounded by trees and gardens. It was a pretty tribute of respect her children and grandchildren paid her that day, in accordance with the old French usage of honoring the parent. I should like to linger on the scene, and tell how Nick made them all laugh over the story of Suzanne Lenoir and the yellow birds, and how the children pressed around him and made him imitate all the denizens of wood and field, amid deafening shrieks of delight.

"You have probably delayed Gaspard's wooing another year, Mr. Temple. Suzanne is a sad coquette," said Colonel Auguste Chouteau, laughing, as we set out for the ball.

The sun was hanging low over the western hills as we approached the barracks, and out of the open windows came the merry, mad sounds of violin, guitar, and flageo-

let, the tinkle of a triangle now and then, the shouts of laughter, the shuffle of many feet over the puncheons. Within the door, smiling and benignant, unmindful of the stifling atmosphere, sat the black-robed village priest talking volubly to an elderly man in a scarlet cap, and several stout ladies ranged along the wall: beyond them, on a platform, Zéron, the baker, fiddled as though his life depended on it, the perspiration dripping from his brow, frowning, gesticulating at them with the flageolet and the triangle. And in a dim, noisy, heated whirl the whole village went round and round and round under the low ceiling in the *valse*, young and old, rich and poor, high and low, the sound of their laughter and the scraping of their feet cut now and again by an agonized squeak from Zéron's fiddle. From time to time a staggering, panting couple would fling themselves out, help themselves liberally to pink *sirop* from the bowl on the side table, and then fling themselves in once more, until Zéron stopped from sheer exhaustion, to tune up for a *pas de deux*.

Across the room, by the *sirop* bowl, a pair of red ribbons flaunted, a pair of eyes sent a swift challenge, Zéron and his assistants struck up again, and there in a corner was Nick Temple, with characteristic effrontery attempting a *pas de deux* with Suzanne. Though Nick was ignorant, he was not ungraceful, and the village laughed and admired. And when Zéron drifted back into a *valse* he seized Suzanne's plump figure in his arms and bore her, unresisting, like a prize among the dancers, avoiding alike the fat and unwieldy, the clumsy and the spiteful. For a while the tune held its mad pace, and ended with a shriek and a snap on a high note, for Zéron had broken a string. Amid a burst of laughter from the far end of the room I saw Nick stop before an open window in which a prying Indian was framed, swing Suzanne at arm's length, and bow abruptly at the brave with a grunt that startled him into life.

"*Va-t'en, méchant!*" shrieked Suzanne, excitedly.

Poor Gaspard! Poor Hippolyte! They would gain Suzanne for a dance only to have her snatched away at the next by the slim and reckless young gentleman in the

gray court clothes. Little Nick cared that the affair soon became the amusement of the company. From time to time, as he glided past with Suzanne on his shoulder, he nodded gayly to Colonel Chouteau or made a long face at me, and to save our souls we could not help laughing.

"The girl has met her match, for she has played shuttlecock with all the hearts in the village," said Monsieur Chouteau. "But perhaps it is just as well that Mr. Temple is leaving to-night. I have signed a *bon*, Mr. Ritchie, by which you can obtain money at New Orleans. And do not forget to present our letter to Monsieur de Saint Gré. He has a daughter, by the way, who will be more of a match for your friend's fascinations than Suzanne."

The evening faded into twilight, with no signs of weariness from the dancers. And presently there stood beside us Jean Baptiste Lenoir, the Colonel's miller.

"*B' soir, Monsieur le Colonel*," he said, touching his skullcap, "the water is very low. You fren'," he added, turning to me, "he stay long time in St. Louis?"

"He is going away to-night, — in an hour or so," I answered, with thanksgiving in my heart.

"I am sorry," said Monsieur Lenoir, politely, but his looks belied his words. "He is ver' fond Suzanne. *Peut-être* he marry her, but I think not. I come away from France to escape the fine gentlemen; long time ago they want to run off with my wife. She was like Suzanne."

"How long ago did you come from France, Monsieur?" I asked, to get away from an uncomfortable subject.

"It is twenty years," said he, dreamily, in French. "I was born in the *Quartier Saint Jean*, on the harbor of the city of Marseilles near *Notre Dame de la Nativité*." And he told of a tall, uneven house of four stories, with a high pitched roof, and a little barred door and window at the bottom giving out upon the rough cobbles. He spoke of the smell of the sea, of the rollicking sailors who surged through the narrow street to embark on his Majesty's men-of-war, and of the King's white soldiers in ranks of four going to foreign lands. And how he had become a farmer, the tenant of a country family. Excitement grew on

him, and he mopped his brow with his blue rumal handkerchief.

"They desire all, the nobles," he cried, "I make the land good, and they seize it. I marry a pretty wife, and Monsieur le Comte he want her. *L' bon Dieu*," he added bitterly, relapsing into French. "France is for the King and the nobility, Monsieur. The poor have but little chance there. In the country I have seen the peasants eat roots, and in the city the poor devour the refuse from the houses of the rich. It was we who paid for their luxuries, and with mine own eyes I have seen their gilded coaches ride down weak men and women in the streets. But it cannot last. They will murder Louis and burn the great châteaux. I, who speak to you, am of the people, Monsieur, I know it."

The sun had long set, and with flint and tow they were touching the flame to the candles, which flickered transparent yellow in the deepening twilight. So absorbed had I become in listening to Lenoir's description that I had forgotten Nick. Now I searched for him among the promenading figures, and missed him. In vain did I seek for a glimpse of Suzanne's red ribbons, and I grew less and less attentive to the miller's reminiscences and arraignments of the nobility. Had Nick indeed run away with his daughter?

The dancing went on with unabated zeal, and through the open door in the fainting azure of the sky the summer moon hung above the hills like a great yellow orange. Striving to hide my uneasiness, I made my farewells to Madame Chouteau's sons and daughters and their friends, and with Colonel Chouteau I left the hall and began to walk towards Monsieur Gratiot's, hoping against hope that Nick had gone there to change. But we had scarce reached the road before we could see two figures in the distance, hazily outlined in the mid-light of the departed sun and the coming moon. The first was Monsieur Gratiot himself, the second Benjy. Monsieur Gratiot took me by the hand.

"I regret to inform you, Mr. Ritchie," said he, politely,

"that my keel boats are loaded and ready to leave. Were you on any other errand I should implore you to stay with us."

"Is Temple at your house?" I asked faintly.

"Why, no," said Monsieur Gratiot; "I thought he was with you at the ball."

"Where is your master?" I demanded sternly of Benjy.

"I ain't seed him, Marse Dave, sence I put him inter dem fine clothes 'at he w'ars a-cou'tin'."

"He has gone off with the girl," put in Colonel Chouteau, laughing.

"But where?" I said, with growing anger at this lack of consideration on Nick's part.

"I'll warrant that Gaspard or Hippolyte Beaujais will know, if they can be found," said the Colonel. "Neither of them willingly lets the girl out of his sight."

As we hurried back towards the throbbing sounds of Zéron's fiddle I apologized as best I might to Monsieur Gratiot, declaring that if Nick were not found within the half-hour I would leave without him. My host protested that an hour or so would make no difference. We were about to pass through the group of loungers that loitered by the gate when the sound of rapid footsteps arrested us, and we turned to confront two panting and perspiring young men who halted beside us. One was Hippolyte Beaujais, more fantastic than ever as he faced the moon, and the other was Gaspard. They had plainly made a common cause, but it was Hippolyte who spoke.

"Monsieur," he cried, "you seek your friend? Ha, we have found him, — we will lead you to him."

"Where is he?" said Colonel Chouteau, repressing another laugh.

"On the pond, Monsieur, — in a boat, Monsieur, with Suzanne, Monsieur le Colonel! And, moreover, he will come ashore for no one."

"*Parbleu*," said the Colonel, "I should think not for any arguments that you two could muster. But we will go there."

"How far is it?" I asked, thinking of Monsieur Gratiot.

"About a mile," said Colonel Chouteau, "a pleasant walk."

We stepped out, Hippolyte and Gaspard running in front, the Colonel and Monsieur Gratiot and myself following; and a snicker which burst out now and then told us that Benjy was in the rear. On any other errand I should have thought the way beautiful, for the country road, rutted by wooden wheels, wound in and out through pleasant vales and over gentle rises, whence we caught glimpses from time to time of the Mississippi gleaming like molten gold to the eastward. Here and there, nestling against the gentle slopes of the hillside clearing, was a low-thatched farmhouse among its orchards. As we walked, Nick's escapade, instead of angering Monsieur Gratiot, seemed to present itself to him in a more and more ridiculous aspect, and twice he nudged me to call my attention to the two vengefully triumphant figures silhouetted against the moon ahead of us. From time to time also I saw Colonel Chouteau shaking with laughter. As for me, it was impossible to be angry at Nick for any space. Nobody else would have carried off a girl in the face of her rivals for a moonlight row on a pond a mile away.

At length we began to go down into the valley where Chouteau's pond was, and we caught glimpses of the shimmering of its waters through the trees, ay, and presently heard them tumbling lightly over the mill-dam. The spot was made for romance, — a sequestered vale, clad with forest trees, cleared a little by the water-side, where Monsieur Lenoir raised his maize and his vegetables. Below the mill, so Monsieur Gratiot told me, where the creek lay in pools on its limestone bed, the village washing was done; and every Monday morning bare-legged negresses strode up this road, the bundles of clothes balanced on their heads, the paddles in their hands, followed by a stream of black urchins who tempted Providence to drown them.

Down in the valley we came to a path that branched from the road and led under the oaks and hickories towards the pond, and we had not taken twenty paces in it before the notes of a guitar and the sound of a voice reached our

ears. And then, when the six of us stood huddled in the rank growth at the water's edge, we saw a boat floating idly in the forest shadow on the far side.

I put my hand to my mouth.

"Nick!" I shouted.

There came for an answer, with the careless and unskilful thrumming of the guitar, the end of the verse: —

> "Thine eyes are bright as the stars at night,
> Thy cheeks like the rose of the dawning, oh!"

"*Hélas!*" exclaimed Hippolyte, sadly, "there is no other boat."

"Nick!" I shouted again, reënforced vociferously by the others.

The music ceased, there came feminine laughter across the water, then Nick's voice, in French that dared everything: —

"Go away and amuse yourselves at the dance. *Peste*, it is scarce an hour ago I threatened to row ashore and break your heads. *Allez vous en, jaloux!*"

A scream of delight from Suzanne followed this sally, which was received by Gaspard and Hippolyte with a rattle of *sacrés*, and — despite our irritation — the Colonel, Monsieur Gratiot, and myself with a burst of involuntary laughter.

"*Parbleu*," said the Colonel, choking, "it is a pity to disturb such a one. Gratiot, if it was my boat, I'd delay the departure till morning."

"Indeed, I shall have had no small entertainment as a solace," said Monsieur Gratiot. "Listen!"

The tinkle of the guitar was heard again, and Nick's voice, strong and full and undisturbed: —

> "S'posin' I was to go to N' O'leans an' take sick an' die,
> Like a bird into the country my spirit would fly.
> Go 'way, old man, and leave me alone,
> For I am a stranger and a long way from home."

There was a murmur of voices in the boat, the sound of a paddle gurgling as it dipped, and the dugout shot out towards the middle of the pond and drifted again.

I shouted once more at the top of my lungs: —

"Come in here, Nick, instantly!"

There was a moment's silence.

"By gad, it's Parson Davy!" I heard Nick exclaim. "Halloo, Davy, how the deuce did you get there?"

"No thanks to you," I retorted hotly. "Come in."

"Lord," said he, "is it time to go to New Orleans?"

"One might think New Orleans was across the street," said Monsieur Gratiot. "What an attitude of mind!"

The dugout was coming towards us now, propelled by easy strokes, and Nick could be heard the while talking in low tones to Suzanne. We could only guess at the tenor of his conversation, which ceased entirely as they drew near. At length the prow slid in among the rushes, was seized vigorously by Gaspard and Hippolyte, and the boat hauled ashore.

"Thank you very much, Messieurs; you are most obliging," said Nick. And taking Suzanne by the hand, he helped her gallantly over the gunwale. "Monsieur," he added, turning in his most irresistible manner to Monsieur Gratiot, "if I have delayed the departure of your boat, I am exceedingly sorry. But I appeal to you if I have not the best of excuses."

And he bowed to Suzanne, who stood beside him coyly, looking down. As for 'Polyte and Gaspard, they were quite breathless between rage and astonishment. But Colonel Chouteau began to laugh.

"*Diable*, Monsieur, you are right," he cried, "and rather than have missed this entertainment I would pay Gratiot for his cargo."

"*Au revoir*, Mademoiselle," said Nick, "I will return when I am released from bondage. When this terrible mentor relaxes vigilance, I will escape and make my way back to you through the forests."

"Oh!" cried Mademoiselle to me, "you will let him come back, Monsieur."

"Assuredly, Mademoiselle," I said, "but I have known him longer than you, and I tell you that in a month he will not wish to come back."

Hippolyte gave a grunt of approval to this plain speech. Suzanne exclaimed, but before Nick could answer footsteps were heard in the path and Lenoir himself, perspiring, panting, exhausted, appeared in the midst of us.

"Suzanne!" he cried, "Suzanne!" And turning to Nick, he added quite simply, "So, Monsieur, you did not run off with her, after all?"

"There was no place to run, Monsieur," answered Nick.

"Praise be to God for that!" said the miller, heartily; "there is some advantage in living in the wilderness, when everything is said."

"I shall come back and try, Monsieur," said Nick.

The miller raised his hands.

"I assure you that he will not, Monsieur," I put in.

He thanked me profusely, and suddenly an idea seemed to strike him.

"There is the priest," he cried; "*Monsieur le curé* retires late. There is the priest, Monsieur."

There was an awkward silence, broken at length by an exclamation from Gaspard. Colonel Chouteau turned his back, and I saw his shoulders heave. All eyes were on Nick, but the rascal did not seem at all perturbed.

"Monsieur," he said, bowing, "marriage is a serious thing, and not to be entered into lightly. I thank you from my heart, but I am bound now with Mr. Ritchie on an errand of such importance that I must make a sacrifice of my own interests and affairs to his."

"If Mr. Temple wishes—" I began, with malicious delight. But Nick took me by the shoulder.

"My dear Davy," he said, giving me a vicious kick, "I could not think of it. I will go with you at once. *Adieu*, Mademoiselle," said he, bending over Suzanne's unresisting hand. "*Adieu*, Messieurs, and I thank you for your great interest in me." (This to Gaspard and Hippolyte.) "And now, Monsieur Gratiot, I have already presumed too much on your patience. I will follow you, Monsieur."

We left them, Lenoir, Suzanne, and her two suitors, standing at the pond, and made our way through the path in the forest. It was not until we reached the road and

had begun to climb out of the valley that the silence was broken between us.

"Monsieur," said Colonel Chouteau, slyly, "do you have many such escapes?"

"It might have been closer," said Nick.

"Closer?" ejaculated the Colonel.

"Assuredly," said Nick, "to the extent of abducting *Monsieur le curé*. As for you, Davy," he added, between his teeth, "I mean to get even with you."

It was well for us that the Colonel and Monsieur Gratiot took the escapade with such good nature. And so we walked along through the summer night, talking gayly, until at length the lights of the village twinkled ahead of us, and in the streets we met many parties making merry on their homeward way. We came to Monsieur Gratiot's, bade our farewells to Madame, picked up our saddle-bags, the two gentlemen escorting us down to the river bank where the keel boat was tugging at the ropes that held her, impatient to be off. Her captain, a picturesque Canadian by the name of Xavier Paret, was presented to us; we bade our friends farewell, and stepped across the plank to the deck. As we were casting off, Monsieur Gratiot called to us that he would take the first occasion to send our horses back to Kentucky. The oars were manned, the heavy hulk moved, and we were shot out into the mighty current of the river on our way to New Orleans.

Nick and I stood for a long time on the deck, and the windows of the little village gleamed like stars among the trees. We passed the last of its houses that nestled against the hill, and below that the forest lay like velvet under the moon. The song of our boatmen broke the silence of the night: —

"Voici le temps et la saison,
Voici le temps et la saison,
Ah! vrai, que les journées sont longues,
Ah! vrai, que les journées sont longues!"

CHAPTER X

THE KEEL BOAT

We were embarked on a strange river, in a strange boat, and bound for a strange city. To us Westerners a halo of romance, of unreality, hung over New Orleans. To us it had an Old World, almost Oriental flavor of mystery and luxury and pleasure, and we imagined it swathed in the moisture of the Delta, built of quaint houses, with courts of shining orange trees and magnolias, and surrounded by flowering plantations of unimagined beauty. It was most fitting that such a place should be the seat of dark intrigues against material progress, and this notion lent added zest to my errand thither. As for Nick, it took no great sagacity on my part to predict that he would forget Suzanne and begin to look forward to the Creole beauties of the Mysterious City.

First, there was the fur-laden keel boat in which we travelled, gone forever now from Western navigation. It had its rude square sail to take advantage of the river winds, its mast strongly braced to hold the long tow-ropes. But tow-ropes were for the endless up-river journey, when a numerous crew strained day after day along the bank, chanting the voyageurs' songs. Now we were light-manned, two half-breeds and two Canadians to handle the oars in time of peril, and Captain Xavier, who stood aft on the cabin roof, leaning against the heavy beam of the long, curved tiller, watching hawklike for snag and eddy and bar. Within the cabin was a great fireplace of stones, where our cooking was done, and bunks set round for the men in cold weather and rainy. But in these fair nights we chose to sleep on deck.

Far into the night we sat, Nick and I, our feet dangling over the forward edge of the cabin, looking at the glory of the moon on the vast river, at the endless forest crown, at the haze which hung like silver dust under the high bluffs on the American side. We slept. We awoke again as the moon was shrinking abashed before the light that glowed above these cliffs, and the river was turned from brown to gold and then to burnished copper, the forest to a thousand shades of green from crest to the banks where the river was licking the twisted roots to nakedness. The south wind wafted the sharp wood-smoke from the chimney across our faces. In the stern Xavier stood immovable against the tiller, his short pipe clutched between his teeth, the colors of his new worsted belt made gorgeous by the rising sun.

"*B' jour*, Michié," he said, and added in the English he had picked up from the British traders, "the breakfas' he is ready, and Jean make him good. Will you have the grace to descen'?"

We went down the ladder into the cabin, where the odor of the furs mingled with the smell of the cooking. There was a fricassee steaming on the crane, some of Zéron's bread, brought from St. Louis, and coffee that Monsieur Gratiot had provided for our use. We took our bowls and cups on deck and sat on the edge of the cabin.

"By gad," cried Nick, "it lacks but the one element to make it a paradise."

"And what is that?" I demanded.

"A woman," said he.

Xavier, who overheard, gave a delighted laugh.

"*Parbleu*, Michié, you have right," he said, "but Michié Gratiot, he say no. In Nouvelle Orléans we find some."

Nick got to his feet, and if anything he did could have surprised me, I should have been surprised when he put his arm coaxingly about Xavier's neck. Xavier himself was surprised and correspondingly delighted.

"Tell me, Xavier," he said, with a look not to be resisted, "do you think I shall find some beauties there?"

"Beauties!" exclaimed Xavier, "La Nouvelle Orléans

— it is the home of beauty, Michié. They promenade themselves on the levee, they look down from ze gallerie, *mais* —"

"But what, Xavier?"

"But, *mon Dieu*, Michié, they are vair' *difficile*. They are not like Englis' beauties, there is the father and the mother, and — the convent." And Xavier, who had a wen under his eye, laid his finger on it.

"For shame, Xavier," cried Nick; "and you are balked by such things?"

Xavier thought this an exceedingly good joke, and he took his pipe out of his mouth to laugh the better.

"Me? *Mais non*, Michié. And yet ze Alcalde, he mek me afraid. Once he put me in ze calaboose when I tried to climb ze balcon'."

Nick roared.

"I will show you how, Xavier," he said; "as to climbing the balconies, there is a *convenance* in it, as in all else. For instance, one must be daring, and discreet, and nimble, and ready to give the law a presentable answer, and lacking that, a piastre. And then the fair one must be a fair one indeed."

"*Diable*, Michié," cried Xavier, "you are ze mischief."

"Nay," said Nick, "I learned it all and much more from my cousin, Mr. Ritchie."

Xavier stared at me for an instant, and considering that he knew nothing of my character, I thought it extremely impolite of him to laugh. Indeed, he tried to control himself, for some reason standing in awe of my appearance, and then he burst out into such loud haw-haws that the crew poked their heads above the cabin hatch.

"Michié Reetchie," said Xavier, and again he burst into laughter that choked further speech. He controlled himself and laid his finger on his wen.

"You don't believe it," said Nick, offended.

"Michié Reetchie a gallant!" said Xavier.

"An incurable," said Nick, "an amazingly clever rogue at device when there is a petticoat in it. Davy, do I do you justice?"

Xavier roared again.

"*Quel maître!*" he said.

"Xavier," said Nick, gently taking the tiller out of his hand, "I will teach you how to steer a keel boat."

"*Mon Dieu*," said Xavier, "and who is to pay Michié Gratiot for his fur? The river, she is full of things."

"Yes, I know, Xavier, but you will teach me to steer."

"*Volontiers*, Michié, as we go now. But there come a time when I, even I, who am twenty year on her, do not know whether it is right or left. Ze rock — he vair' hard. Ze snag, he grip you like dat," and Xavier twined his strong arms around Nick until he was helpless. "Ze bar — he hol' you by ze leg. An' who is to tell you how far he run under ze yellow water, Michié? I, who speak to you, know. But I know not how I know. Ze water, sometime she tell, sometime she say not'ing."

"*À bas*, Xavier!" said Nick, pushing him away, "I will teach you the river."

Xavier laughed, and sat down on the edge of the cabin. Nick took easily to accomplishments, and he handled the clumsy tiller with a certainty and distinction that made the boatmen swear in two languages and a patois. A great water-logged giant of the Northern forests loomed ahead of us. Xavier sprang to his feet, but Nick had swung his boat swiftly, smoothly, into the deeper water on the outer side.

"*Saint Jacques*, Michié," cried Xavier, "you mek him better zan I thought."

Fascinated by a new accomplishment, Nick held to the tiller, while Xavier with a trained eye scanned the troubled, yellow-glistening surface of the river ahead. The wind died, the sun beat down with a moist and venomous sting, and northeastward above the edge of the bluff a bank of cloud like sulphur smoke was lifted. Gradually Xavier ceased his jesting and became quiet.

"Looks like a hurricane," said Nick.

"*Mon Dieu*," said Xavier, "you have right, Michié," and he called in his rapid patois to the crew, who lounged forward in the cabin's shade. There came to my mind

the memory of that hurricane at Temple Bow long ago, a storm that seemed to have brought so much sorrow into my life. I glanced at Nick, but his face was serene.

The cloud-bank came on in black and yellow masses, and the saffron light I recalled so well turned the living green of the forest to a sickly pallor and the yellow river to a tinge scarce to be matched on earth. Xavier had the tiller now, and the men were straining at the oars to send the boat across the current towards the nearer western shore. And as my glance took in the scale of things, the miles of bluff frowning above the bottom, the river that seemed now like a lake of lava gently boiling, and the wilderness of the western shore that reached beyond the ken of man, I could not but shudder to think of the conflict of nature's forces in such a place. A grim stillness reigned over all, broken only now and again by a sharp command from Xavier. The men were rowing for their lives, the sweat glistening on their red faces.

"She come," said Xavier.

I looked, not to the northeast whence the banks of cloud had risen, but to the southwest, and it seemed as though a little speck was there against the hurrying film of cloud. We were drawing near the forest line, where a little creek made an indentation. I listened, and from afar came a sound like the strumming of low notes on a guitar, and sad. The terrified scream of a panther broke the silence of the forest, and then the other distant note grew stronger, and stronger yet, and rose to a high hum like unto no sound on this earth, and mingled with it now was a lashing like water falling from a great height. We grounded, and Xavier, seizing a great tow-rope, leaped into the shallow water and passed the bight around a trunk. I cried out to Nick, but my voice was drowned. He seized me and flung me under the cabin's lee, and then above the fearful note of the storm came cracklings like gunshots of great trees snapping at their trunk. We saw the forest wall burst out — how far away I know not — and the air was filled as with a flock of giant birds, and boughs crashed on the roof of the cabin and tore the

water in the darkness. How long we lay clutching each other in terror on the rocking boat I may not say, but when the veil first lifted there was the river like an angry sea, and limitless, the wind in its fury whipping the foam from the crests and bearing it off into space. And presently, as we stared, the note lowered and the wind was gone again, and there was the water tossing foolishly, and we lay safe amidst the green wreckage of the forest as by a miracle.

It was Nick who moved first. With white face he climbed to the roof of the cabin and idly seizing the great limb that lay there tried to move it. Xavier, who lay on his face on the bank, rose to a sitting posture and crossed himself. Beyond me crowded the four members of the crew, unhurt. Then we heard Xavier's voice, in French, thanking the Blessed Virgin for our escape.

Further speech was gone from us, for men do not talk after such a matter. We laid hold of the tree across the cabin and, straining, flung it over into the water. A great drop of rain hit me on the forehead, and there came a silver-gray downpour that blotted out the scene and drove us down below. And then, from somewhere in the depths of the dark cabin, came a sound to make a man's blood run cold.

"What's that?" I said, clutching Nick.

"Benjy," said he; "thank God he did not die of fright." We lighted a candle, and poking around, found the negro where he had crept into the farthest corner of a bunk with his face to the wall. And when we touched him he gave vent to a yell that was blood-curdling.

"I'se a bad nigger, Lo'd, yes, I is," he moaned. "I ain't fit fo' jedgment, Lo'd."

Nick shook him and laughed.

"Come out of that, Benjy," he said; "you've got another chance."

Benjy turned, perforce, the whites of his eyes gleaming in the candle-light, and stared at us.

"You ain't gone yit, Marse," he said.

"Gone where?" said Nick.

"I'se done been tole de quality 'll be jedged fust, Marse," said Benjy.

Nick hauled him out on the floor. Climbing to the deck, we found that the boat was already under way, running southward in the current through the misty rain. And gazing shoreward, a sight met my eyes which I shall never forget. A wide vista, carpeted with wreckage, was cut through the forest to the river's edge, and the yellow water was strewn for miles with green boughs. We stared down it, overwhelmed, until we had passed beyond its line.

"It is as straight," said Nick, "as straight as one of her Majesty's alleys I saw cut through the forest at Saint-Cloud."

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Had I space and time to give a faithful account of this journey it would be chiefly a tribute to Xavier's skill, for they who have not put themselves at the mercy of the Mississippi in a small craft can have no idea of the dangers of such a voyage. Infinite experience, a keen eye, a steady hand, and a nerve of iron are required. Now, when the current swirled almost to a rapid, we grazed a rock by the width of a ripple; and again, despite the effort of Xavier and the crew, we would tear the limbs from a huge tree, which, had we hit it fair, would have ripped us from bow to stern. Once, indeed, we were fast on a sand-bar, whence (as Nick said) Xavier fairly cursed us off. We took care to moor at night, where we could be seen as little as possible from the river, and divided the watches lest we should be surprised by Indians. And, as we went southward, our hands and faces became blotched all over by the bites of mosquitoes and flies, and we smothered ourselves under blankets to get rid of them. At times we fished, and one evening, after we had passed the expanse of water at the mouth of the Ohio, Nick pulled a hideous thing from the inscrutable yellow depths,—a slimy, scaleless catfish. He came up like a log, and must have weighed seventy pounds. Xavier and his men and myself made two good meals of him, but Nick would not touch the meat.

The great river teemed with life. There were flocks of herons and cranes and water pelicans, and I know not what other birds, and as we slipped under the banks we often heard the paroquets chattering in the forests. And once, as we drifted into an inlet at sunset, we caught sight of the shaggy head of a bear above the brown water, and leaping down into the cabin I primed the rifle that stood there and shot him. It took the seven of us to drag him on board, and then I cleaned and skinned him as Tom had taught me, and showed Jean how to put the caul fat and liver in rows on a skewer and wrap it in the bear's handkerchief and roast it before the fire. Nick found no difficulty in eating this — it was a dish fit for any gourmand.

We passed the great, red Chickasaw Bluff, which sits facing westward looking over the limitless Louisiana forests, where new and wondrous vines and flowers grew, and came to the beautiful Walnut Hills crowned by a Spanish fort. We did not stop there to exchange courtesies, but pressed on to the Grand Gulf, the grave of many a keel boat before and since. This was by far the most dangerous place on the Mississippi, and Xavier was never weary of recounting many perilous escapes there, or telling how such and such a priceless cargo had sunk in the mud by reason of the lack of skill of particular boatmen he knew of. And indeed, the Canadian's face assumed a graver mien after the Walnut Hills were behind us.

"You laugh, Michié," he said to Nick, a little resentfully. "I who speak to you say that there is four foot on each side of ze bateau. Too much *tafia*, a little too much excite — " and he made a gesture with his hand expressive of total destruction; "ze tornado, I would sooner have him — "

"Bah!" said Nick, stroking Xavier's black beard, "give me the tiller. I will see you through safely, and we will not spare the *tafia* either." And he began to sing a song of Xavier's own: —

"'*Marianson, dame jolie,*
Où est allé votre mari?'"

"*Ah, toujours les dames!*" said Xavier. "But I tell you, Michié, *le diable*, — he is at ze bottom of ze Grand Gulf and his mouth open — so." And he suited the action to the word.

At night we tied up under the shore within earshot of the mutter of the place, and twice that night I awoke with clinched hands from a dream of being spun fiercely against the rock of which Xavier had told, and sucked into the devil's mouth under the water. Dawn came as I was fighting the mosquitoes,—a still, sultry dawn with thunder muttering in the distance.

We breakfasted in silence, and with the crew standing ready at the oars and Xavier scanning the wide expanse of waters ahead, seeking for that unmarked point whence to embark on this perilous journey, we floated down the stream. The prospect was sufficiently disquieting on that murky day. Below us, on the one hand, a rocky bluff reached out into the river, and on the far side was a timber-clad point round which the Mississippi doubled and flowed back on itself. It needed no trained eye to guess at the perils of the place. On the one side the mighty current charged against the bluff and, furious at the obstacle, lashed itself into a hundred sucks and whirls, their course marked by the flotsam plundered from the forests above. Woe betide the boat that got into this devil's caldron! And on the other side, near the timbered point, ran a counter current marked by forest wreckage flowing up-stream. To venture too far on this side was to be grounded or at least to be sent back to embark once more on the trial.

But where was the channel? We watched Xavier with bated breath. Not once did he take his eyes from the swirling water ahead, but gave the tiller a touch from time to time, now right, now left, and called in a monotone for the port or starboard oars. Nearer and nearer we sped, dodging the snags, until the water boiled around us, and suddenly the boat shot forward as in a mill-race, and we clutched the cabin's roof. A triumphant gleam was in Xavier's eyes, for he had hit the channel squarely. And then, like a monster out of the deep, the scaly, black

back of a great northern pine was flung up beside us and sheered us across the channel until we were at the very edge of the foam-specked, spinning water. But Xavier saw it, and quick as lightning brought his helm over and laughed as he heard it crunching along our keel. And so we came swiftly around the bend and into safety once more. The next day there was the Petite Gulf, which bothered Xavier very little, and the day after that we came in sight of Natchez on her heights and guided our boat in amongst the others that lined the shore, scowled at by lounging Indians there, and eyed suspiciously by a hatchet-faced Spaniard in a tawdry uniform who represented his Majesty's customs. Here we stopped for a day and a night that Xavier and his crew might get properly drunk on *tafia*, while Nick and I walked about the town and waited until his Excellency, the commandant, had finished dinner that we might present our letters and obtain his passport. Natchez at that date was a sufficiently unkempt and evil place of dirty, ramshackle houses and gambling dens, where men of the four nations gamed and quarrelled and fought. We were glad enough to get away the following morning, Xavier somewhat saddened by the loss of thirty livres of which he had no memory, and Nick and myself relieved at having the passports in our pockets. I have mine yet among my papers.

"*Natchez*, 29 *de Junio, de* 1789.

"*Concedo libre y seguro pasaporte a Don David Ritchie para que pase a la Nueva Orleans por Agna. Pido y encargo no se le ponga embarazo.*"

A few days more and we were running between low shores which seemed to hold a dark enchantment. The rivers now flowed out of, and not into the Mississippi, and Xavier called them bayous, and often it took much skill and foresight on his part not to be shot into the lane they made in the dark forest of an evening. And the forest, — it seemed an impenetrable mystery, a strange tangle of fantastic growths: the live-oak (*chêne vert*), its wide-spreading limbs hung funereally with Spanish moss and

twined in the mistletoe's death embrace; the dark cypress swamp with the conelike knees above the yellow backwaters; and here and there grew the bridelike magnolia which we had known in Kentucky, wafting its perfume over the waters, and wondrous flowers and vines and trees with French names that bring back the scene to me even now with a whiff of romance, *bois d'arc*, *lilac*, *grande volaille* (water-lily). Birds flew hither and thither (the names of every one of which Xavier knew), — the whistling *papabot*, the mournful bittern (*garde-soleil*), and the night-heron (*grosbeck*), who stood like a sentinel on the points.

One night I awoke with the sweat starting from my brow, trying to collect my senses, and I lay on my blanket listening to such plaintive and heart-rending cries as I had never known. Human cries they were, cries as of children in distress, and I rose to a sitting posture on the deck with my hair standing up straight, to discover Nick beside me in the same position.

"God have mercy on us," I heard him mutter, "what's that? It sounds like the wail of all the babies since the world began."

We listened together, and I can give no notion of the hideous mournfulness of the sound. We lay in a swampy little inlet, and the forest wall made a dark blur against the star-studded sky. There was a splash near the boat that made me clutch my legs, the wails ceased and began again with redoubled intensity. Nick and I leaped to our feet and stood staring, horrified, over the gunwale into the black water. Presently there was a laugh behind us, and we saw Xavier resting on his elbow.

"What devil-haunted place is this?" demanded Nick.

"Ha, ha," said Xavier, shaking with unseemly mirth, "you have never heard ze alligator sing, Michié?"

"Alligator!" cried Nick; "there are babies in the water, I tell you."

"Ha, ha," laughed Xavier, flinging off his blanket and searching for his flint and tinder. He lighted a pine knot, and in the red pulsing flare we saw what seemed to be a

dozen black logs floating on the surface. And then Xavier flung the cresset at them, fire and all. There was a lashing, a frightful howl from one of the logs, and the night's silence once more.

Often after that our slumbers were disturbed, and we would rise with maledictions in our mouths to fling the handiest thing at the serenaders. When we arose in the morning we would often see them by the dozens, basking in the shallows, with their wide mouths flapped open waiting for their prey. Sometimes we ran upon them in the water, where they looked like the rough-bark pine logs from the North, and Nick would have a shot at them. When he hit one fairly there would be a leviathan-like roar and a churning of the river into suds.

At length there were signs that we were drifting out of the wilderness, and one morning we came in sight of a rich plantation with its dark orange trees and fields of indigo, with its wide-galleried manor-house in a grove. And as we drifted we heard the negroes chanting at their work, the plaintive cadence of the strange song adding to the mystery of the scene. Here in truth was a new world, a land of peaceful customs, green and moist. The soft-toned bells of it seemed an expression of its life, — so far removed from our own striving and fighting existence in Kentucky. Here and there, between plantations, a belfry could be seen above the cluster of the little white village planted in the green; and when we went ashore amongst these simple French people they treated us with such gentle civility and kindness that we would fain have lingered there. The river had become a vast yellow lake, and often as we drifted of an evening the wail of a slave dance and monotonous beating of a tom-tom would float to us over the water.

At last, late one afternoon, we came in sight of that strange city which had filled our thoughts for many days.

CHAPTER XI

THE STRANGE CITY

Nick and I stood by the mast on the forward part of the cabin, staring at the distant, low-lying city, while Xavier sought for the entrance to the eddy which here runs along the shore. If you did not gain this entrance, — so he explained, — you were carried by a swift current below New Orleans and might by no means get back save by the hiring of a crew. Xavier, however, was not to be caught thus, and presently we were gliding quietly along the eastern bank, or levee, which held back the river from the lowlands. Then, as we looked, the levee became an esplanade shaded by rows of willows, and through them we caught sight of the upper galleries and low, curving roofs of the city itself. There, cried Xavier, was the Governor's house on the corner, where the great Miro lived, and beyond it the house of the Intendant; and then, gliding into an open space between the keel boats along the bank, stared at by a score of boatmen and idlers from above, we came to the end of our long journey. No sooner had we made fast than we were boarded by a shabby customs officer who, when he had seen our passports, bowed politely and invited us to land. We leaped ashore, gained the gravelled walk on the levee, and looked about us.

Squalidity first met our eyes. Below us, crowded between the levee and the row of houses, were dozens of squalid market-stalls tended by cotton-clad negroes. Beyond, across the bare Place d'Armes, a blackened gap in the line of houses bore witness to the devastation of the year gone by, while here and there a roof, struck by the

setting sun, gleamed fiery red with its new tiles. The levee was deserted save for the negroes and the river men.

"Time for siesta, Michié," said Xavier, joining us; "I will show you ze inn of which I spik. She is kep' by my fren', Madame Bouvet."

"Xavier," said Nick, looking at the rolling flood of the river, "suppose this levee should break?"

"Ah," said Xavier, "then some Spaniard who never have a bath — he feel what water is lak."

Followed by Benjy with the saddle-bags, we went down the steps set in the levee into this strange, foreign city. It was like unto nothing we had ever seen, nor can I give an adequate notion of how it affected us, — such a mixture it seemed of dirt and poverty and wealth and romance. The narrow, muddy streets ran with filth, and on each side along the houses was a sun-baked walk held up by the curved sides of broken flatboats, where two men might scarcely pass. The houses, too, had an odd and foreign look, some of wood, some of upright logs and plaster, and newer ones, Spanish in style, of adobe, with curving roofs of red tiles and strong eaves spreading over the *banquette* (as the sidewalk was called), casting shadows on lemon-colored walls. Since New Orleans was in a swamp, the older houses for the most part were lifted some seven feet above the ground, and many of these houses had wide galleries on the street side. Here and there a shop was set in the wall; a watchmaker was to be seen poring over his work at a tiny window, a shoemaker cross-legged on the floor. Again, at an open wicket, we caught a glimpse through a cool archway into a flowering court-yard. Stalwart negresses with bright kerchiefs made way for us on the banquette. Hands on hips, they swung along erect, with baskets of cakes and sweetmeats on their heads, musically crying their wares.

At length, turning a corner, we came to a white wooden house on the Rue Royale, with a flight of steps leading up to the entrance. In place of a door a flimsy curtain hung in the doorway, and, pushing this aside, we followed

Xavier through a darkened hall to a wide gallery that overlooked a court-yard. This court-yard was shaded by several great trees which grew there; the house and gallery ran down one other side of it; and the two remaining sides were made up of a series of low cabins, these forming the various outhouses and the kitchen. At the far end of this gallery a sallow, buxom lady sat sewing at a table, and Xavier saluted her very respectfully.

"Madame," he said, "I have brought you from St. Louis with Michié Gratiot's compliments two young American gentlemen, who are travelling to amuse themselves."

The lady rose and beamed upon us.

"From Monsieur Gratiot," she said; "you are very welcome, gentlemen, to such poor accommodations as I have. It is not unusual to have American gentlemen in New Orleans, for many come here first and last. And I am happy to say that two of my best rooms are vacant. Zoey!"

There was a shrill answer from the court below, and a negro girl in a yellow turban came running up, while Madame Bouvet bustled along the gallery and opened the doors of two darkened rooms. Within I could dimly see a walnut dresser, a chair, and a walnut bed on which was spread a mosquito bar.

"*Voilà*, Messieurs," cried Madame Bouvet, "there is still a little time for a siesta. No siesta!" cried Madame, eying us aghast; "ah, the Americans they never rest — never."

We bade farewell to the good Xavier, promising to see him soon; and Nick, shouting to Benjy to open the saddle-bags, proceeded to array himself in the clothes which had made so much havoc at St. Louis. I boded no good from this proceeding, but I reflected, as I watched him dress, that I might as well try to turn the Mississippi from its course as to attempt to keep my cousin from the search for gallant adventure. And I reflected that his indulgence in pleasure-seeking would serve the more to divert any suspicions which might fall upon my own head. At last, when the setting sun was flooding the court-yard, he

stood arrayed upon the gallery, ready to venture forth to conquest.

Madame Bouvet's tavern, or hotel, or whatever she was pleased to call it, was not immaculately clean. Before passing into the street we stood for a moment looking into the public room on the left of the hallway, a long saloon, evidently used in the early afternoon for a dining room, and at the back of it a wide, many-paned window, capped by a Spanish arch, looked out on the gallery. Near this window was a gay party of young men engaged at cards, waited on by the yellow-turbaned Zoey, and drinking what evidently was claret punch. The sounds of their jests and laughter pursued us out of the house.

The town was waking from its siesta, the streets filling, and people stopped to stare at Nick as we passed. But Nick, who was plainly in search of something he did not find, hurried on. We soon came to the quarter which had suffered most from the fire, where new houses had gone up or were in the building beside the blackened logs of many of Bienville's time. Then we came to a high white wall that surrounded a large garden, and within it was a long, massive building of some beauty and pretension, with a high, latticed belfry and heavy walls and with arched dormers in the sloping roof. As we stood staring at it through the iron grille set in the archway of the lodge, Nick declared that it put him in mind of some of the châteaux he had seen in France, and he crossed the street to get a better view of the premises. An old man in coarse blue linen came out of the lodge and spoke to me.

"It is the convent of the good nuns, the Ursulines, Monsieur," he said in French, "and it was built long ago in the Sieur de Bienville's time, when the colony was young. For forty-five years, Monsieur, the young ladies of the city have come here to be educated."

"What does he say?" demanded Nick, pricking up his ears as he came across the street.

"That young men have been sent to the mines of Brazil for climbing the walls," I answered.

"Who wants to climb the walls?" said Nick, disgusted.

"The young ladies of the town go to school here," I answered; "it is a convent."

"It might serve to pass the time," said Nick, gazing with a new interest at the latticed windows. "How much would you take, my friend, to let us in at the back way this evening?" he demanded of the porter in French.

The good man gasped, lifted his hands in horror, and straightway let loose upon Nick a torrent of French invectives that had not the least effect except to cause a blacksmith's apprentice and two negroes to stop and stare at us.

"Pooh!" exclaimed Nick, when the man had paused for want of breath, "it is no trick to get over that wall."

"*Bon Dieu!*" cried the porter, "you are Kentuckians, yes? I might have known that you were Kentuckians, and I shall advise the good sisters to put glass on the wall and keep a watch."

"The young ladies are beautiful, you say?" said Nick.

At this juncture, with the negroes grinning and the porter near bursting with rage, there came out of the lodge the fattest woman I have ever seen for her size. She seized her husband by the back of his loose frock and pulled him away, crying out that he was losing time by talking to vagabonds, besides disturbing the good sisters. Then we went away, Nick following the convent wall down to the river. Turning southward under the bank past the huddle of market-stalls, we came suddenly upon a sight that made us pause and wonder.

New Orleans was awake. A gay and laughing throng paced the esplanade on the levee under the willows, with here and there a cavalier on horseback on the Royal Road below. Across the Place d'Armes the spire of the parish church stood against the fading sky, and to the westward the mighty river stretched away like a gilded floor. It was a strange throng. There were grave Spaniards in long cloaks and feathered beavers; jolly merchants and artisans in short linen jackets, each with his tabatière, the wives with bits of finery, the children laughing and shout-

ing and dodging in and out between fathers and mothers beaming with quiet pride and contentment; swarthy boatmen with their worsted belts, gaudy negresses chanting in the soft patois, and here and there a blanketed Indian. Nor was this all. Some occasion (so Madame Bouvet had told us) had brought a sprinkling of fashion to town that day, and it was a fashion to astonish me. There were fine gentlemen with swords and silk waistcoats and silver shoe-buckles, and ladies in filmy summer gowns. Greuze ruled the mode in France then, but New Orleans had not got beyond Watteau. As for Nick and me, we knew nothing of Greuze and Watteau then, and we could only stare in astonishment. And for once we saw an officer of the Louisiana Regiment resplendent in a uniform that might have served at court.

Ay, and there was yet another sort. Every flatboatman who returned to Kentucky was full of tales of the marvellous beauty of the quadroons and octoroons, stories which I had taken with a grain of salt; but they had not indeed been greatly overdrawn. For here were these ladies in the flesh, their great, opaque, almond eyes consuming us with a swift glance, and each walking with a languid grace beside her duenna. Their faces were like old ivory, their dress the stern Miro himself could scarce repress. In former times they had been lavish in their finery, and even now earrings still gleamed and color broke out irrepressibly.

Nick was delighted, but he had not dragged me twice the length of the esplanade ere his eye was caught by a young lady in pink who sauntered between an elderly gentleman in black silk and a young man more gayly dressed.

"Egad," said Nick, "there is my divinity, and I need not look a step farther."

I laughed.

"You have but to choose, I suppose, and all falls your way," I answered.

"But look!" he cried, halting me to stare after the girl, "what a face, and what a form! And what a carriage,

by Jove! There is breeding for you! And Davy, did you mark the gentle, rounded arm? Thank heaven these short sleeves are the fashion."

"You are mad, Nick," I answered, pulling him on, "these people are not to be stared at so. And once I present our letters to Monsieur de Saint-Gré, it will not be difficult to know any of them."

"Look!" said he, "that young man, lover or husband, is a brute. On my soul, they are quarrelling."

The three had stopped by a bench under a tree. The young man, who wore claret silk and a sword, had one of those thin faces of dirty complexion which show the ravages of dissipation, and he was talking with a rapidity and vehemence of which only a Latin tongue will admit. We could see, likewise, that the girl was answering with spirit, — indeed, I should write a stronger word than spirit, — while the elderly gentleman, who had a good-humored, fleshy face and figure, was plainly doing his best to calm them both. People who were passing stared curiously at the three.

"Your divinity evidently has a temper," I remarked.

"For that scoundel — certainly," said Nick; "but come, they are moving on."

"You mean to follow them?" I exclaimed.

"Why not?" said he. "We will find out where they live and who they are, at least."

"And you have taken a fancy to this girl?"

"I have looked them all over, and she's by far the best I've seen. I can say so much honestly."

"But she may be married," I said weakly.

"Tut, Davy," he answered, "it's more than likely, from the violence of their quarrel. But if so, we will try again."

"We!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, come on!" he cried, dragging me by the sleeve, "or we shall lose them."

I resisted no longer, but followed him down the levee, in my heart thanking heaven that he had not taken a fancy to an octoroon. Twilight had set in strongly, the gay crowd was beginning to disperse, and in the distance

the three figures could be seen making their way across the Place d'Armes, the girl hanging on the elderly gentleman's arm, and the young man following with seeming sullenness behind. They turned into one of the narrower streets, and we quickened our steps. Lights gleamed in the houses; voices and laughter, and once the tinkle of a guitar, came to us from court-yard and gallery. But Nick, hurrying on, came near to bowling more than one respectable citizen we met on the banquette, into the ditch. We reached a corner, and the three were nowhere to be seen.

"Curse the luck!" cried Nick, "we have lost them. The next time I'll stop for no explanations."

There was no particular reason why I should have been penitent, but I ventured to say that the house they had entered could not be far off.

"And how the devil are we to know it?" demanded Nick.

This puzzled me for a moment, but presently I began to think that the two might begin quarrelling again, and said so. Nick laughed and put his arm around my neck.

"You have no mean ability for intrigue when you put your mind to it, Davy," he said; "I vow I believe you are in love with the girl yourself."

I disclaimed this with some vehemence. Indeed, I had scarcely seen her.

"They can't be far off," said Nick; "we'll pitch on a likely house and camp in front of it until bedtime."

"And be flung into a filthy calaboose by a constable," said I. "No, thank you."

We walked on, and halfway down the block we came upon a new house with more pretensions than its neighbors. It was set back a little from the street, and there was a high adobe wall into which a pair of gates were set, and a wicket opening in one of them. Over the wall hung a dark fringe of magnolia and orange boughs. On each of the gate-posts a crouching lion was outlined dimly against the fainting light, and, by crossing the street, we could see the upper line of a latticed gallery under the

low roof. We took our stand within the empty doorway of a blackened house, nearly opposite, and there we waited, Nick murmuring all sorts of ridiculous things in my ear. But presently I began to reflect upon the consequences of being taken in such a situation by a constable and dragged into the light of a public examination. I put this to Nick as plainly as I could, and was declaring my intention of going back to Madame Bouvet's, when the sound of voices arrested me. The voices came from the latticed gallery, and they were low at first, but soon rose to such an angry pitch that I made no doubt we had hit on the right house after all. What they said was lost to us, but I could distinguish the woman's voice, low-pitched and vibrant as though insisting upon a refusal, and the man's scarce adult tones, now high as though with balked passion, now shaken and imploring. I was for leaving the place at once, but Nick clutched my arm tightly; and suddenly, as I stood undecided, the voices ceased entirely, there were the sounds of a scuffle, and the lattice of the gallery was flung open. In the all but darkness we saw a figure climb over the railing, hang suspended for an instant, and drop lightly to the ground. Then came the light relief of a woman's gown in the opening of the lattice, the cry "Auguste, Auguste!" the wicket in the gate opened and slammed, and a man ran at top speed along the banquette towards the levee.

Instinctively I seized Nick by the arm as he started out of the doorway.

"Let me go," he cried angrily, "let me go, Davy."

But I held on.

"Are you mad?" I said.

He did not answer, but twisted and struggled, and before I knew what he was doing he had pushed me off the stone step into a tangle of blackened beams behind. I dropped his arm to save myself, and it was mere good fortune that I did not break an ankle in the fall. When I had gained the step again he was gone after the man, and a portly citizen stood in front of me, looking into the doorway.

"*Qu'est-ce-qu'il-y-a la dedans?*" he demanded sharply.

It was a sufficiently embarrassing situation. I put on a bold front, however, and not deigning to answer, pushed past him and walked with as much leisure as possible along the banquette in the direction which Nick had taken. As I turned the corner I glanced over my shoulder, and in the darkness I could just make out the man standing where I had left him. In great uneasiness I pursued my way, my imagination summing up for Nick all kinds of adventures with disagreeable consequences. I walked for some time — it may have been half an hour — aimlessly, and finally decided it would be best to go back to Madame Bouvet's and await the issue with as much calmness as possible. He might not, after all, have caught the fellow.

There were few people in the dark streets, but at length I met a man who gave me directions, and presently found my way back to my lodging place. Talk and laughter floated through the latticed windows into the street, and when I had pushed back the curtain and looked into the saloon I found the same gaming party at the end of it, sitting in their shirt-sleeves amidst the moths and insects that hovered around the candles.

"Ah, Monsieur," said Madame Bouvet's voice behind me, "you must excuse them. They will come here and play, the young gentlemen, and I cannot find it in my heart to drive them away, though sometimes I lose a respectable lodger by their noise. But, after all, what would you?" she added with a shrug; "I love them, the young men. But, Monsieur," she cried, "you have had no supper! And where is Monsieur your companion? *Comme il est beau garçon!*"

"He will be in presently," I answered with unwarranted assumption.

Madame shot at me the swiftest of glances and laughed, and I suspected that she divined Nick's propensity for adventure. However, she said nothing more than to bid me sit down at the table, and presently Zoey came in with lights and strange, highly seasoned dishes, which I ate

with avidity, notwithstanding my uneasiness of mind, watching the while the party at the far end of the room. There were five young gentlemen playing a game I knew not, with intervals of intense silence, and boisterous laughter and execrations while the cards were being shuffled and the money rang on the board and glasses were being filled from a stand at one side. Presently Madame Bouvet returned, and placing before me a cup of wondrous coffee, advanced down the room towards them.

"Ah, Messieurs," she cried, "you will ruin my poor house."

The five rose and bowed with marked profundity. One of them, with a puffy, weak, good-natured face, answered her briskly, and after a little raillery she came back to me. I had a question not over discreet on my tongue's tip.

"There are some fine residences going up here, Madame," I said.

"Since the fire, Monsieur, the dreadful fire of Good Friday a year ago. You admire them?"

"I saw one," I answered with indifference, "with a wall and lions on the gate-posts —"

"*Mon Dieu*, that is a house," exclaimed Madame; "it belongs to Monsieur de Saint-Gré."

"To Monsieur de Saint-Gré!" I repeated.

She shot a look at me. She had bright little eyes like a bird's, that shone in the candlelight.

"You know him, Monsieur?"

"I heard of him in St. Louis," I answered.

"You will meet him, no doubt," she continued. "He is a very fine gentleman. His grandfather was Commissary-general of the colony, and he himself is a cousin of the Marquis de Saint-Gré, who has two châteaux, a house in Paris, and is a favorite of the King." She paused, as if to let this impress itself upon me, and added archly, "*Tenez*, Monsieur, there is a daughter —"

She stopped abruptly.

I followed her glance, and my first impression — of claret-color — gave me a shock. My second confirmed

it, for in the semi-darkness beyond the rays of the candle was a thin, eager face, prematurely lined, with coal-black, lustrous eyes that spoke eloquently of indulgence. In an instant I knew it to be that of the young man whom I had seen on the levee.

"Monsieur Auguste?" stammered Madame.

"*Bon soir*, Madame," he cried gayly, with a bow; "*diable*, they are already at it, I see, and the punch in the bowl. I will win back to-night what I have lost by a week of accursed luck."

"Monsieur your father has relented, perhaps," said Madame, deferentially.

"Relented!" cried the young man, "not a sou. *C'est égal!* I have the means here," and he tapped his pocket, "I have the means here to set me on my feet again, Madame."

He spoke with a note of triumph, and Madame took a curious step towards him.

"*Qu'est-ce-que c'est*, Monsieur Auguste?" she inquired.

He drew something that glittered from his pocket and beckoned to her to follow him down the room, which she did with alacrity.

"Ha, Adolphe," he cried to the young man of the puffy face, "I will have my revenge to-night. *Voilà!*" and he held up the shining thing, "this goes to the highest bidder, and you will agree that it is worth a pretty sum."

They rose from their chairs and clustered around him at the table, Madame in their midst, staring with bent heads at the trinket which he held to the light. It was Madame's voice I heard first, in a kind of frightened cry.

"*Mon Dieu*, Monsieur Auguste, you will not part with that!" she exclaimed.

"Why not?" demanded the young man, indifferently. "It was painted by Boze, the back is solid gold, and the Jew in the Rue Toulouse will give me four hundred livres for it to-morrow morning."

There followed immediately such a chorus of questions,

exclamations, and shrill protests from Madame Bouvet, that I (being such a laborious French scholar) could distinguish but little of what they said. I looked in wonderment at the gesticulating figures grouped against the light, Madame imploring, the youthful profile of the newcomer marked with a cynical and scornful refusal. More than once I was for rising out of my chair to go over and see for myself what the object was, and then, suddenly, I perceived Madame Bouvet coming towards me in evident agitation. She sank into the chair beside me.

"If I had four hundred livres," she said, "if I had four hundred livres!"

"And what then?" I asked.

"Monsieur," she said, "a terrible thing has happened. Auguste de Saint-Gré—"

"Auguste de Saint-Gré!" I exclaimed.

"He is the son of that Monsieur de Saint-Gré of whom we spoke," she answered, "a wild lad, a spendthrift, a gambler, if you like. And yet he is a Saint-Gré, Monsieur, and I cannot refuse him. It is the miniature of Mademoiselle Hélène de Saint-Gré, the daughter of the Marquis, sent to Mamselle 'Toinette, his sister, from France. How he has obtained it I know not."

"Ah!" I exclaimed sharply, the explanation of the scene of which I had been a witness coming to me swiftly. The rascal had wrenched it from her in the gallery and fled.

"Monsieur," continued Madame, too excited to notice my interruption, "if I had four hundred livres I would buy it of him, and Monsieur de Saint-Gré *père* would willingly pay it back in the morning."

I reflected. I had a letter in my pocket to Monsieur de Saint-Gré, the sum was not large, and the act of Monsieur Auguste de Saint-Gré in every light was detestable. A rising anger decided me, and I took a wallet from my pocket.

"I will buy the miniature, Madame," I said.

She looked at me in astonishment.

"God bless you, Monsieur," she cried; "if you could see

Mamselle 'Toinette you would pay twice the sum. The whole town loves her. Monsieur Auguste, Monsieur Auguste!" she shouted, "here is a gentleman who will buy your miniature."

The six young men stopped talking and stared at me with one accord. Madame arose, and I followed her down the room towards them, and, had it not been for my indignation, I should have felt sufficiently ridiculous. Young Monsieur de Saint-Gré came forward with the good-natured, easy insolence to which he had been born, and looked me over.

"Monsieur is an American," he said.

"I understand that you have offered this miniature for four hundred livres," I said.

"It is the Jew's price," he answered; "*mais pardieu*, what will you?" he added with a shrug, "I must have the money. *Regardez*, Monsieur, you have a bargain. Here is Mademoiselle Hélène de Saint-Gré, daughter of my lord the Marquis of whom I have the honor to be a cousin," and he made a bow. "It is by the famous court painter, Joseph Boze, and Mademoiselle de Saint-Gré herself is a favorite of her Majesty." He held the portrait close to the candle and regarded it critically. "Mademoiselle Hélène Victoire Marie de Saint-Gré, painted in a costume of Henry the Second's time, with a ruff, you notice, which she wore at a ball given by his Highness the Prince of Condé at Chantilly. A trifle haughty, if you like, Monsieur, but I venture to say you will be hopelessly in love with her within the hour."

At this there was a general titter from the young gentlemen at the table.

"All of which is neither here nor there, Monsieur," I answered sharply. "The question is purely a commercial one, and has nothing to do with the lady's character or position."

"It is well said, Monsieur," Madame Bouvet put in.

Monsieur Auguste de Saint-Gré shrugged his slim shoulders and laid down the portrait on the walnut table.

"Four hundred livres, Monsieur," he said.

I counted out the money, scrutinized by the curious eyes of his companions, and pushed it over to him. He bowed carelessly, sat him down, and began to shuffle the cards, while I picked up the miniature and walked out of the room. Before I had gone twenty paces I heard them laughing at their game and shouting out the stakes. Suddenly I bethought myself of Nick. What if he should come in and discover the party at the table? I stopped short in the hallway, and there Madame Bouvet overtook me.

"How can I thank you, Monsieur?" she said. And then, "You will return the portrait to Monsieur de Saint-Gré?"

"I have a letter from Monsieur Gratiot to that gentleman, which I shall deliver in the morning," I answered. "And now, Madame, I have a favor to ask of you."

"I am at Monsieur's service," she answered simply.

"When Mr. Temple comes in, he is not to go into that room," I said, pointing to the door of the saloon; "I have my reasons for requesting it."

For answer Madame went to the door, closed it, and turned the key. Then she sat down beside a little table with a candlestick and took up her knitting.

"It will be as Monsieur says," she answered.

I smiled.

"And when Mr. Temple comes in will you kindly say that I am waiting for him in his room?" I asked.

"As Monsieur says," she answered. "I wish Monsieur a good-night and pleasant dreams."

She took a candlestick from the table, lighted the candle, and handed it me with a courtesy. I bowed, and made my way along the gallery above the deserted court-yard. Entering my room and closing the door after me, I drew the miniature from my pocket and stood gazing at it for I know not how long.

CHAPTER XII

LES ÎLES

I STOOD staring at the portrait, I say, with a kind of fascination that astonished me, seeing that it had come to me in such a way. It was no French face of my imagination, and as I looked it seemed to me that I knew Mademoiselle Hélène de Saint-Gré. And yet I smile as I write this, realizing full well that my strange and foreign surroundings and my unforeseen adventure had much to do with my state of mind. The lady in the miniature might have been eighteen, or thirty-five. Her features were of the clearest cut, the nose the least trifle aquiline, and by a blurred outline the painter had given to the black hair piled high upon the head a suggestion of waviness. The eyebrows were straight, the brown eyes looked at the world with an almost scornful sense of humor, and I marked that there was determination in the chin. Here was a face that could be infinitely haughty or infinitely tender, a mouth of witty — nay, perhaps cutting — repartee of brevity and force. A lady who spoke quickly, moved quickly, or reposed absolutely. A person who commanded by nature and yet (dare I venture the thought?) was capable of a supreme surrender. I was aroused from this odd revery by footsteps on the gallery, and Nick burst into the room. Without pausing to look about him, he flung himself lengthwise on the bed on top of the mosquito bar.

"A thousand curses on such a place," he cried; "it is full of rat holes and rabbit warrens."

"Did you catch your man?" I asked innocently.

"Catch him!" said Nick, with a little excusable profanity; "he went in at one end of such a warren and came out at another. I waited for him in two streets until an

officious person chanced along and threatened to take me before the Alcalde. What the devil is that you have got in your hand, Davy?" he demanded, raising his head.

"A miniature that took my fancy, and which I bought."

He rose from the bed, yawned, and taking it in his hand, held it to the light. I watched him curiously.

"Lord," he said, "it is such a passion as I might have suspected of you, Davy."

"There was nothing said about passion," I answered hotly.

"Then why the deuce did you buy it?" he said with some pertinence.

This staggered me.

"A man may fancy a thing, without indulging in a passion, I suppose," I replied.

Nick held the picture at arm's length in the palm of his hand and regarded it critically.

"Faith," said he, "you may thank heaven it is only a picture. If such a one ever got hold of you, Davy, she would general you even as you general me. Egad," he added with a laugh, "there would be no more walking the streets at night in search of adventure for you. Consider carefully the masterful features of that lady and thank God you haven't got her."

I was inclined to be angry, but ended by laughing.

"There will be no rivalry between us, at least," I said.

"Rivalry!" exclaimed Nick. "Heaven forbid that I should aspire to such abject slavery. When I marry, it will be to command."

"All the more honor in such a conquest," I suggested.

"Davy," said he, "I have long been looking for some such flaw in your insuperable wisdom. But I vow I can keep my eyes open no longer. Benjy!"

A smothered response came from the other side of the wall, and Benjy duly appeared in the doorway, blinking at the candlelight, to put his master to bed.

We slept that night with no bed covering save the mosquito bar, as was the custom in New Orleans. Indeed, the heat was most oppressive, but we had become to some

extent inured to it on the boat, and we were both in such sound health that our slumbers were not disturbed. Early in the morning, however, I was awakened by a negro song from the court-yard, and I lay pleasantly for some minutes listening to the early sounds, breathing in the aroma of coffee which mingled with the odor of the flowers of the court, until Zoey herself appeared in the doorway, holding a cup in her hand. I arose, and taking the miniature from the table, gazed at it in the yellow morning light; and then, having dressed myself, I put it carefully in my pocket and sat down at my portfolio to compose a letter to Polly Ann, knowing that a description of what I had seen in New Orleans would amuse her. This done, I went out into the gallery, where Madame was already seated at her knitting, in the shade of the great tree that stood in the corner of the court and spread its branches over the eaves. She arose and courtesied, with a questioning smile.

"Madame," I asked, "is it too early to present myself to Monsieur de Saint-Gré?"

"*Pardieu*, no, Monsieur, we are early risers in the South, for we have our siesta. You are going to return the portrait, Monsieur?"

I nodded.

"God bless you for the deed," said she. "*Tenez*, Monsieur," she added, stepping closer to me, "you will tell his father that you bought it from Monsieur Auguste?"

I saw that she had a soft spot in her heart for the rogue.

"I will make no promises, Madame," I answered.

She looked at me timidly, appealingly, but I bowed and departed. The sun was riding up into the sky, the walls already glowing with his heat, and a midsummer languor seemed to pervade the streets as I walked along. The shadows now were sharply defined, the checkered foliage of the trees was flung in black against the yellow-white wall of the house with the lions, and the green-latticed gallery which we had watched the night before seemed silent and deserted. I knocked at the gate, and presently a bright-turbaned *gardienne* opened it.

Was Monsieur de Saint-Gré at home. The *gardienne*

looked me over, and evidently finding me respectable, replied with many protestations of sorrow that he was not, that he had gone with Mamselle very early that morning to his country place at Les Îles. This information I extracted with difficulty, for I was not by any means versed in the negro patois.

As I walked back to Madame Bouvet's I made up my mind that there was but the one thing to do, to go at once to Monsieur de Saint-Gré's plantation. Finding Madame still waiting in the gallery, I asked her to direct me thither.

"You have but to follow the road that runs southward along the levee, and some three leagues will bring you to it, Monsieur. You will inquire for Monsieur de Saint-Gré."

"Can you direct me to Mr. Daniel Clark's?" I asked.

"The American merchant and banker, the friend and associate of the great General Wilkinson whom you sent down to us last year? Certainly, Monsieur. He will no doubt give you better advice than I on this matter."

I found Mr. Clark in his counting-room, and I had not talked with him five minutes before I began to suspect that, if a treasonable understanding existed between Wilkinson and the Spanish government, Mr. Clark was innocent of it. He being the only prominent American in the place, it was natural that Wilkinson should have formed with him a business arrangement to care for the cargoes he sent down. Indeed, after we had sat for some time chatting together, Mr. Clark began himself to make guarded inquiries on this very subject. Did I know Wilkinson? How was his enterprise of selling Kentucky products regarded at home? But I do not intend to burden this story with accounts of a matter which, though it has never been wholly clear, has been long since fairly settled in the public mind. Mr. Clark was most amiable, accepted my statement that I was travelling for pleasure, and honored Monsieur Chouteau's *bon* (for my purchase of the miniature had deprived me of nearly all my ready money), and said that Mr. Temple and I would need horses to get to Les Îles.

"And unless you purpose going back to Kentucky by

keel boat, or round by sea to Philadelphia or New York, and cross the mountains," he said, "you will need good horses for your journey through Natchez and the Cumberland country. There is a consignment of Spanish horses from the westward just arrived in town," he added, "and I shall be pleased to go with you to the place where they are sold. I shall not presume to advise a Kentuckian on such a purchase."

The horses were crowded together under a dirty shed near the levee, and the vessel from which they had been landed rode at anchor in the river. They were the scrawny, tough ponies of the plains, reasonably cheap, and it took no great discernment on my part to choose three of the strongest and most intelligent looking. We went next to a saddler's, where I selected three saddles and bridles of Spanish workmanship, and Mr. Clark agreed to have two of his servants meet us with the horses before Madame Bouvet's within the hour. He begged that we would dine with him when we returned from Les Îles.

"You will not find an island, Mr. Ritchie," he said; "Saint-Gré's plantation is a huge block of land between the river and a cypress swamp behind. Saint-Gré is a man with a wonderful quality of mind, who might, like his ancestors, have made his mark if necessity had probed him or opportunity offered. He never forgave the Spanish government for the murder of his father, nor do I blame him. He has his troubles. His son is an incurable rake and degenerate, as you may have heard."

I went back to Madame Bouvet's, to find Nick emerging from his toilet.

"What deviltry have you been up to, Davy?" he demanded.

"I have been to the House of the Lions to see your divinity," I answered, "and in a very little while horses will be here to carry us to her."

"What do you mean?" he asked, grasping me by both shoulders.

"I mean that we are going to her father's plantation, some way down the river."

"On my honor, Davy, I did not suspect you of so much enterprise," he cried. "And her husband — ?"

"Does not exist," I replied. "Perhaps, after all, I might be able to give you instruction in the conduct of an adventure. The man you chased with such futility was her brother, and he stole from her the miniature of which I am now the fortunate possessor."

He stared at me for a moment in rueful amazement.

"And her name?" he demanded.

"Antoinette de Saint-Gré," I answered; "our letter is to her father."

He made me a rueful bow.

"I fear that I have undervalued you, Mr. Ritchie," he said. "You have no peer. I am unworthy to accompany you, and furthermore, it would be useless."

"And why useless!" I inquired, laughing.

"You have doubtless seen the lady, and she is yours," said he.

"You forget that I am in love with a miniature," I said.

In half an hour we were packed and ready, the horses had arrived, we bade good-by to Madame Bouvet and rode down the miry street until we reached the road behind the levee. Turning southward, we soon left behind the shaded esplanade and the city's roofs below us, and came to the first of the plantation houses set back amidst the dark foliage. No tremor shook the fringe of moss that hung from the heavy boughs, so still was the day, and an indefinable, milky haze stretched between us and the cloudless sky above. The sun's rays pierced it and gathered fire; the mighty river beside us rolled listless and sullen, flinging back the heat defiantly. And on our left was a tropical forest in all its bewildering luxuriance, the live-oak, the hackberry, the myrtle, the Spanish bayonet in bristling groups, and the shaded places gave out a scented moisture like an orangery; anon we passed fields of corn and cotton, swamps of rice, stretches of poverty-stricken indigo plants, gnawed to the stem by the pest. Our ponies ambled on, unmindful; but Nick

vowed that no woman under heaven would induce him to undertake such a journey again.

Some three miles out of the city we descried two figures on horseback coming towards us, and quickly perceived that one was a gentleman, the other his black servant. They were riding at a more rapid pace than the day warranted, but the gentleman reined in his sweating horse as he drew near to us, eyed us with a curiosity tempered by courtesy, bowed gravely, and put his horse to a canter again.

"Phew!" said Nick, twisting in his saddle, "I thought that all Creoles were lazy."

"We have met the exception, perhaps," I answered. "Did you take in that man?"

"His looks were a little remarkable, come to think of it," answered Nick, settling down into his saddle again.

Indeed, the man's face had struck me so forcibly that I was surprised out of an inquiry which I had meant to make of him, namely, how far we were from the Saint-Gré plantation. We pursued our way slowly, from time to time catching a glimpse of a dwelling almost hid in the distant foliage, until at length we came to a place a little more pretentious than those which we had seen. From the road a graceful flight of wooden steps climbed the levee and descended on the far side to a boat landing, and a straight vista cut through the grove, lined by wild orange trees, disclosed the white pillars and galleries of a far-away plantation house. The grassy path leading through the vista was trimly kept, and on either side of it in the moist, green shade of the great trees flowers bloomed in a profusion of startling colors, — in splotches of scarlet and white and royal purple.

Nick slipped from his horse.

"Behold the mansion of Mademoiselle de Saint-Gré," said he, waving his hand up the vista.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"I am told by a part of me that never lies, Davy," he answered, laying his hand upon his heart; "and besides,"

he added, "I should dislike devilishly to go too far on such a day and have to come back again."

"We will rest here," I said, laughing, "and send in Benjy to find out."

"Davy," he answered, with withering contempt, "you have no more romance in you than a turnip. We will go ourselves and see what befalls."

"Very well, then," I answered, falling in with his humor, "we will go ourselves."

He brushed his face with his handkerchief, gave himself a pull here and a pat there, and led the way down the alley. But we had not gone far before he turned into a path that entered the grove on the right, and to this likewise I made no protest. We soon found ourselves in a heavenly spot, — sheltered from the sun's rays by a dense verdure, — and no one who has not visited these Southern country places can know the teeming fragrance there. One shrub (how well I recall it!) was like unto the perfume of all the flowers and all the fruits, the very essence of the delicious languor of the place that made our steps to falter. A bird shot a bright flame of color through the checkered light ahead of us. Suddenly a sound brought us to a halt, and we stood in a tense and wondering silence. The words of a song, sung carelessly in a clear, girlish voice, came to us from beyond.

"*Je voudrais bien me marier,*
Je voudrais bien me marier,
Mais j'ai grand' peur de me tromper:
Mais j'ai grand' peur de me tromper:
Ils sont si malhonnêtes!
Ma luron, ma lurette,
Ils sont si malhonnêtes!
Ma luron, ma luré."

"We have come at the very zenith of opportunity," I whispered.

"Hush!" he said.

"*Je ne veux pas d'un avocat,*
Je ne veux pas d'un avocat,
Car ils aiment trop les ducats,
Car ils aiment trop les ducats,

Ils trompent les fillettes,
Ma luron, ma lurette,
Ils trompent les fillettes,
Ma luron, ma luré."

"Eliminating Mr. Ritchie, I believe," said Nick, turning on me with a grimace. "But hark again!"

"*Je voudrais bien d'un officier:*
Je voudrais bien d' un officier:
Je marcherais a pas cárres,
Je marcherais a pas cárres,
Dans ma joli' chambrette,
Ma luron, ma lurette,
Dans ma joli' chambrette,
Ma luron, ma luré."

The song ceased with a sound that was half laughter, half sigh. Before I realized what he was doing, Nick, instead of retracing his steps towards the house, started forward. The path led through a dense thicket which became a casino hedge, and suddenly I found myself peering over his shoulder into a little garden bewildering in color. In the centre of the garden a great live-oak spread its sheltering branches. Around the gnarled trunk was a seat. And on the seat, — her sewing fallen into her lap, her lips parted, her eyes staring wide, sat the young lady whom we had seen on the levee the evening before. And Nick was making a bow in his grandest manner.

"*Hélas, Mademoiselle,*" he said, "*je ne suis pas officier, mais on peut arranger tout cela, sans doute.*"

My breath was taken away by this unheard-of audacity, and I braced myself against screams, flight, and other feminine demonstrations of terror. The young lady did nothing of the kind. She turned her back to us, leaned against the tree, and to my astonishment I saw her slim shoulders shaken with laughter. At length, very slowly, she looked around, and in her face struggled curiosity and fear and merriment. Nick made another bow, worthy of Versailles, and she gave a frightened little laugh.

"You are English, Messieurs — yes?" she ventured.

"We were once!" cried Nick, "but we have changed, Mademoiselle."

"*Et quoi donc?*" relapsing into her own language.

"Americans," said he. "Allow me to introduce to you the Honorable David Ritchie, whom you rejected a few moments ago."

"Whom I rejected?" she exclaimed.

"Alas," said Nick, with a commiserating glance at me, "he has the misfortune to be a lawyer."

Mademoiselle shot at me the swiftest and shyest of glances, and turned to us once more her quivering shoulders. There was a brief silence.

"Mademoiselle?" said Nick, taking a step on the garden path.

"Monsieur?" she answered, without so much as looking around.

"What, now, would you take this gentleman to be?" he asked with an insistence not to be denied.

Again she was shaken with laughter, and suddenly to my surprise she turned and looked full at me.

"In English, Monsieur, you call it — a gallant?"

My face fairly tingled, and I heard Nick laughing with unseemly merriment.

"Ah, Mademoiselle," he cried, "you are a judge of character, and you have read him perfectly."

"Then I must leave you, Messieurs," she answered, with her eyes in her lap. But she made no move to go.

"You need have no fear of Mr. Ritchie, Mademoiselle," answered Nick, instantly. "I am here to protect you against his gallantry."

This time Nick received the glance, and quailed before it.

"And who — *par exemple* — is to protect me against — you, Monsieur?" she asked in the lowest of voices.

"You forget that I, too, am unprotected — and vulnerable, Mademoiselle," he answered.

Her face was hidden again, but not for long.

"How did you come?" she demanded presently.

"On air," he answered, "for we saw you in New Orleans yesterday."

"And — why?"

"Need you ask, Mademoiselle?" said the rogue, and then, with more effrontery than ever, he began to sing: —

"'*Je voudrais bien me marier,*
Je voudrais bien me marier,
Mais j'ai grand' peur de me tromper.'"

She rose, her sewing falling to the ground, and took a few startled steps towards us.

"Monsieur! you will be heard," she cried.

"And put out of the Garden of Eden," said Nick.

"I must leave you," she said, with the quaintest of English pronunciation.

Yet she stood irresolute in the garden path, a picture against the dark green leaves and the flowers. Her age might have been seventeen. Her gown was of some soft and light material printed in buds of delicate color, her slim arms bare above the elbow. She had the ivory complexion of the province, more delicate than I had yet seen, and beyond that I shall not attempt to describe her, save to add that she was such a strange mixture of innocence and ingenuousness and coquetry as I had not imagined. Presently her gaze was fixed seriously on me.

"Do you think it very wrong, Monsieur?" she asked.

I was more than taken aback by this tribute.

"Oh," cried Nick, "the arbiter of etiquette!"

"Since I am here, Mademoiselle," I answered, with anything but readiness, "I am not a proper judge."

Her next question staggered me.

"You are well-born?" she asked.

"Mr. Ritchie's grandfather was a Scottish earl," said Nick, immediately, a piece of news that startled me into protest. "It is true, Davy, though you may not know it," he added.

"And you, Monsieur?" she said to Nick.

"I am his cousin, — is it not honor enough?" said he.

"Yet you do not resemble one another."

"Mr. Ritchie has all the good looks in the family," said Nick.

"Oh!" cried the young lady, and this time she gave us her profile.

"Come, Mademoiselle," said Nick, "since the fates have cast the die, let us all sit down in the shade. The place was made for us."

"Monsieur!" she cried, giving back, "I have never in my life been alone with gentlemen."

"But Mr. Ritchie is a duenna to satisfy the most exacting," said Nick; "when you know him better you will believe me."

She laughed softly and glanced at me. By this time we were all three under the branches.

"Monsieur, you do not understand the French customs. *Mon Dieu*, if the good Sister Lorette could see me now —"

"But she is safe in the convent," said Nick. "Are they going to put glass on the walls?"

"And why?" asked Mademoiselle, innocently.

"Because," said Nick, "because a very bad man has come to New Orleans, — one who is given to climbing walls."

"You?"

"Yes. But when I found that a certain demoiselle had left the convent, I was no longer anxious to climb them."

"And how did you know that I had left it?"

I was at a loss to know whether this were coquetry or innocence.

"Because I saw you on the levee," said Nick.

"You saw me on the levee?" she repeated, giving back.

"And I had a great fear," the rogue persisted.

"A fear of what?"

"A fear that you were married," he said, with a boldness that made me blush. As for Mademoiselle, a color that vied with the June roses charged through her cheeks. She stooped to pick up her sewing, but Nick was before her.

"And why did you think me married?" she asked in a voice so low that we scarcely heard.

"Faith," said Nick, "because you seemed to be quarrelling with a man."

She turned to him with an irresistible seriousness.

"And is that your idea of marriage, Monsieur?"

This time it was I who laughed, for he had been hit very fairly.

"Mademoiselle," said he, "I did not for a moment think it could have been a love match."

Mademoiselle turned away and laughed.

"You are the very strangest man I have ever seen," she said.

"Shall I give you my notion of a love match, Mademoiselle?" said Nick.

"I should think you might be well versed in the subject, Monsieur," she answered, speaking to the tree, "but here is scarcely the time and place." She wound up her sewing, and faced him. "I must really leave you," she said.

He took a step towards her and stood looking down into her face. Her eyes dropped.

"And am I never to see you again?" he asked.

"Monsieur!" she cried softly, "I do not know who you are." She made him a courtesy, took a few steps in the opposite path, and turned. "That depends upon your ingenuity," she added; "you seem to have no lack of it, Monsieur."

Nick was transported.

"You must not go," he cried.

"Must not? How dare you speak to me thus, Monsieur?" Then she tempered it. "There is a lady here whom I love, and who is ill. I must not be long from her bedside."

"She is very ill?" said Nick, probably for want of something better.

"She is not really ill, Monsieur, but depressed — is not that the word? She is a very dear friend, and she has had trouble — so much, Monsieur, — and my mother brought her here. We love her as one of the family."

This was certainly ingenuous, and it was plain that the girl gave us this story through a certain nervousness, for she twisted her sewing in her fingers as she spoke.

"Mademoiselle," said Nick, "I would not keep you from such an errand of mercy."

She gave him a grateful look, more dangerous than any which had gone before.

"And besides," he went on, "we have come to stay awhile with you, Mr. Ritchie and myself."

"You have come to stay awhile? she said.

I thought it time that the farce were ended.

"We have come with letters to your father, Monsieur de Saint-Gré, Mademoiselle," I said, "and I should like very much to see him, if he is at leisure."

Mademoiselle stared at me in unfeigned astonishment.

"But did you not meet him, Monsieur?" she demanded. "He left an hour ago for New Orleans. You must have met a gentleman riding very fast."

It was my turn to be astonished.

"But that was not your father!" I exclaimed.

"*Et pourquoi non?*" she said.

"Is not your father the stout gentleman whom I saw with you on the levee last evening?" I asked.

She laughed.

"You have been observing, Monsieur," she said. "That was my uncle, Monsieur de Beauséjour. You saw me quarrelling with my brother, Auguste," she went on a little excitedly. "Oh, I am very much ashamed of it. I was so angry. My cousin, Mademoiselle Hélène de Saint-Gré, has just sent me from France such a beautiful miniature, and Auguste fell in love with it."

"Fell in love with it!" I exclaimed involuntarily.

"You should see it, Monsieur, and I think you also would fall in love with it."

"I have not a doubt of it," said Nick.

Mademoiselle made the faintest of *moues*.

"Auguste is very wild, as you say," she continued, addressing me, "he is a great care to my father. He intrigues, you know, he wishes *Louisiane* to become French once more, — as we all do. But I should not say this, Monsieur," she added in a startled tone. "You will not tell? No, I know you will not. We do not like the Spaniards. They killed my grandfather when they came to take the province. And once, the Governor-general

Miro sent for my father and declared he would put Auguste in prison if he did not behave himself. But I have forgotten the miniature. When Auguste saw that he fell in love with it, and now he wishes to go to France and obtain a commission through our cousin, the Marquis of Saint-Gré, and marry Mademoiselle Hélène."

"A comprehensive programme, indeed," said Nick.

"My father has gone back to New Orleans," she said, "to get the miniature from Auguste. He took it from me, Monsieur." She raised her head a little proudly. "If my brother had asked it, I might have given it to him, though I treasured it. But Auguste is so — impulsive. My uncle told my father, who is very angry. He will punish Auguste severely, and — and I do not like to have him punished. Oh, I wish I had the miniature."

"Your wish is granted, Mademoiselle," I answered, drawing the case from my pocket and handing it to her.

She took it, staring at me with eyes wide with wonder, and then she opened it mechanically.

"Monsieur," she said with great dignity, "do you mind telling me where you obtained this?"

"I found it, Mademoiselle," I answered; and as I spoke I felt Nick's fingers on my arm.

"You found it? Where? How, Monsieur?"

"At Madame Bouvet's, the house where we stayed."

"Oh," she said with a sigh of relief, "he must have dropped it. It is there where he meets his associates, where they talk of the French *Louisiane*."

Again I felt Nick pinching me, and I gave a sigh of relief. Mademoiselle was about to continue, but I interrupted her.

"How long will your father be in New Orleans, Mademoiselle?" I asked.

"Until he finds Auguste," she answered. "It may be days, but he will stay, for he is very angry. But will you not come into the house, Messieurs, and be presented to my mother?" she asked. "I have been very — inhospitable," she added with a glance at Nick.

We followed her through winding paths bordered by

shrubs and flowers, and presently came to a low house surrounded by a wide, cool gallery, and shaded by spreading trees. Behind it were clustered the kitchens and quarters of the house servants. Mademoiselle, picking up her dress, ran up the steps ahead of us and turned to the left in the hall into a darkened parlor. The floor was bare, save for a few mats, and in the corner was a massive escritoire of mahogany with carved feet, and there were tables and chairs of a like pattern. It was a room of more distinction than I had seen since I had been in Charlestown, and reflected the solidity of its owners.

"If you will be so kind as to wait here, Messieurs," said Mademoiselle, "I will call my mother."

And she left us.

I sat down, rather uncomfortably, but Nick took a stand and stood staring down at me with folded arms.

"How I have undervalued you, Davy," he said.

"I am not proud of it," I answered shortly.

"What the deuce is to do now?" he asked.

"I cannot linger here," I answered; "I have business with Monsieur de Saint-Gré, and I must go back to New Orleans at once."

"Then I will wait for you," said Nick. "Davy, I have met my fate."

I laughed in spite of myself.

"It seems to me that I have heard that remark before," I answered.

He had not time to protest, for we heard footsteps in the hall, and Mademoiselle entered, leading an older lady by the hand. In the light of the doorway I saw that she was thin and small and yellow, but her features had a regularity and her mien a dignity which made her impressing, which would have convinced a stranger that she was a person of birth and breeding. Her hair, tinged with gray, was crowned by a lace cap.

"Madame," I said, bowing and coming forward, "I am David Ritchie, from Kentucky, and this is my cousin, Mr. Temple, of Charlestown. Monsieur Gratiot and Colonel Chouteau, of St. Louis, have been kind enough to give us

letters to Monsieur de Saint-Gré." And I handed her one of the letters which I had ready.

"You are very welcome, Messieurs," she answered, with the same delightful accent which her daughter had used, "and you are especially welcome from such a source. The friends of Colonel Chouteau and of Monsieur Gratiot are our friends. You will remain with us, I hope, Messieurs," she continued. "Monsieur de Saint-Gré will return in a few days at best."

"By your leave, Madame, I will go to New Orleans at once and try to find Monsieur," I said, "for I have business with him."

"You will return with him, I hope," said Madame.

I bowed.

"And Mr. Temple will remain?" she asked, with a questioning look at Nick.

"With the greatest pleasure in the world, Madame," he answered, and there was no mistaking his sincerity. As he spoke, Mademoiselle turned her back on him.

I would not wait for dinner, but pausing only for a sip of cool Madeira and some other refreshment, I made my farewells to the ladies. As I started out of the door to find Benjy, who had been waiting for more than an hour, Mademoiselle gave me a neatly folded note.

"You will be so kind as to present that to my father, Monsieur," she said.

CHAPTER XIII

MONSIEUR AUGUSTE ENTRAPPED

It may be well to declare here and now that I do not intend to burden this story with the business which had brought me to New Orleans. While in the city during the next few days I met a young gentleman named Daniel Clark, a nephew of that Mr. Clark of whom I have spoken. Many years after the time of which I write this Mr. Daniel Clark the younger, who became a rich merchant and an able man of affairs, published a book which sets forth with great clearness proofs of General Wilkinson's duplicity and treason, and these may be read by any who would satisfy himself further on the subject. Mr. Wharton had not believed, nor had I flattered myself that I should be able to bring such a fox as General Wilkinson to earth. Abundant circumstantial evidence I obtained: Wilkinson's intimacy with Miro was well known, and I likewise learned that a cipher existed between them. The permit to trade given by Miro to Wilkinson was made no secret of. In brief, I may say that I discovered as much as could be discovered by any one without arousing suspicion, and that the information with which I returned to Kentucky was of some material value to my employers.

I have to thank Monsieur Philippe de St. Gré for a great deal. And I take this opportunity to set down the fact that I have rarely met a more remarkable man.

As I rode back to town alone a whitish film was spread before the sun, and ere I had come in sight of the fortifications the low forest on the western bank was a dark green blur against the sky. The esplanade on the levee was deserted, the willow trees had a mournful look, while

the bright tiles of yesterday seemed to have faded to a sombre tone. I spied Xavier on a bench smoking with some friends of his.

"He make much rain soon, Michié," he cried. "You hev good time, I hope, Michié."

I waved my hand and rode on, past the Place d'Armes with its white diagonal bands strapping its green like a soldier's front, and as I drew up before the gate of the House of the Lions the warning taps of the storm were drumming on the magnolia leaves. The same *gardienne* came to my knock, and in answer to her shrill cry a negro lad appeared to hold my horse. I was ushered into a brick-paved archway that ran under the latticed gallery toward a flower-filled court-yard, but ere we reached this the *gardienne* turned to the left up a flight of steps with a delicate balustrade which led to an open gallery above. And there stood the gentleman whom we had met hurrying to town in the morning. A gentleman he was, every inch of him. He was dressed in black silk, his hair in a cue, and drawn away from a face of remarkable features. He had a high-bridged nose, a black eye that held an inquiring sternness, a chin indented, and a receding forehead. His stature was indeterminable. In brief, he might have stood for one of those persons of birth and ability who become prime ministers of France.

"Monsieur de St. Gré?" I said.

He bowed gracefully, but with a tinge of condescension. I was awed, and considering the relations which I had already had with his family, I must admit that I was somewhat frightened.

"Monsieur," I said, "I bring letters to you from Monsieur Gratiot and Colonel Chouteau of St. Louis. One of these I had the honor to deliver to Madame de St. Gré, and here is the other."

"Ah," he said, with another keen glance, "I met you this morning, did I not?"

"You did, Monsieur."

He broke the seal, and, going to the edge of the gallery, held the letter to the light. As he read a peal of thunder

broke distantly, the rain came down in a flood. Then he folded the paper carefully and turned to me again.

"You will make my house your home, Mr. Ritchie," he said; "recommended from such a source, I will do all I can to serve you. But where is this Mr. Temple of whom the letter speaks? His family in Charlestown is known to me by repute."

"By Madame de St. Gré's invitation he remained at Les Îles," I answered, speaking above the roar of the rain.

"I was just going to the table," said Monsieur de St. Gré; "we will talk as we eat."

He led the way into the dining room, and as I stood on the threshold a bolt of great brilliancy lighted its yellow-washed floor and walnut furniture of a staid pattern. A deafening crash followed as we took our seats, while Monsieur de St. Gré's man lighted four candles of green myrtle-berry wax.

"Monsieur Gratiot's letter speaks vaguely of politics, Mr. Ritchie," began Monsieur de St. Gré. He spoke English perfectly, save for an occasional harsh aspiration which I cannot imitate.

Directing his man to fetch a certain kind of Madeira, he turned to me with a look of polite inquiry which was scarcely reassuring. And I reflected, the caution with which I had been endowed coming uppermost, that the man might have changed since Monsieur Gratiot had seen him. He had, moreover, the air of a man who gives a forced attention, which seemed to me the natural consequences of the recent actions of his son.

"I fear that I am intruding upon your affairs, Monsieur," I answered.

"Not at all, sir," he said politely. "I have met that charming gentleman, Mr. Wilkinson, who came here to brush away the causes of dissension, and cement a friendship between Kentucky and Louisiana."

It was most fortunate that the note of irony did not escape me.

"Where governments failed, General Wilkinson succeeded," I answered dryly.

Monsieur de St. Gré glanced at me, and an enigmatical smile spread over his face. I knew then that the ice was cracked between us. Yet he was too much a man of the world not to make one more tentative remark.

"A union between Kentucky and Louisiana would be a resistless force in the world, Mr. Ritchie," he said.

"It was Nebuchadnezzar who dreamed of a composite image, Monsieur," I answered; "and Mr. Wilkinson forgets one thing, — that Kentucky is a part of the United States."

At that Monsieur St. Gré laughed outright. He became a different man, though he lost none of his dignity.

"I should have had more faith in my old friend Gratiot," he said; "but you will pardon me if I did not recognize at once the statesman he had sent me, Mr. Ritchie."

It was my turn to laugh.

"Monsieur," he went on, returning to that dignity of mien which marked him, "my political opinions are too well known that I should make a mystery of them to you. I was born a Frenchman, I shall die a Frenchman, and I shall never be happy until Louisiana is French once more. My great-grandfather, a brother of the Marquis de St. Gré of that time, and a wild blade enough, came out with D'Iberville. His son, my grandfather, was the Commissary-general of the colony under the Marquis de Vaudreuil. He sent me to France for my education, where I was introduced at court by my kinsman, the old Marquis, who took a fancy to me and begged me to remain. It was my father's wish that I should return, and I did not disobey him. I had scarcely come back, Monsieur, when that abominable secret bargain of Louis the Fifteenth became known, ceding Louisiana to Spain. You may have heard of the revolution which followed here. It was a mild affair, and the remembrance of it makes me smile to this day, though with bitterness. I was five and twenty, hot-headed, and French. *Que voulez-vous?*" and Monsieur de St. Gré shrugged his shoulders. "O'Reilly, the famous Spanish general, came with his men-of-war. Well I remember the days we waited with leaden hearts for the men-of-war to come up from the

English turn; and I can see now the cannon frowning from the ports, the grim spars, the high poops crowded with officers, the great anchors splashing the yellow water. I can hear the chains running. The ships were in line of battle before the town, their flying bridges swung to the levee, and they loomed above us like towering fortresses. It was dark, Monsieur, such as this afternoon, and we poor French colonists stood huddled in the open space below, waiting for we knew not what."

He paused, and I started, for the picture he drew had carried me out of myself.

"On the 18th of August, 1769, — well I remember the day," Monsieur de St. Gré continued, "the Spanish troops landed late in the afternoon, twenty-six hundred strong, the artillery rumbling over the bridges, the horses wheeling and rearing. And they drew up as in line of battle in the Place d'Armes, — dragoons, *fusileros de montañas*, light and heavy infantry. Where were our white cockades then? Fifty guns shook the town, the great O'Reilly limped ashore through the smoke, and Louisiana was lost to France. We had a cowardly governor, Monsieur, whose name is written in the annals of the province in letters of shame. He betrayed Monsieur de St. Gré and others into O'Reilly's hands, and when my father was cast into prison he was seized with such a fit of anger that he died."

Monsieur de St. Gré was silent. Without, under the eaves of the gallery, a white rain fell, and a steaming moisture arose from the court-yard.

"What I have told you, Monsieur, is common knowledge. Louisiana has been Spanish for twenty years. I no longer wear the white cockade, for I am older now." He smiled. "Strange things are happening in France, and the old order to which I belong" (he straightened perceptibly) "seems to be tottering. I have ceased to intrigue, but thank God I have not ceased to pray. Perhaps — who knows? — perhaps I may live to see again the lily of France stirred by the river breeze."

He fell into a revery, his fine head bent a little, but

presently aroused himself and eyed me curiously. I need not say that I felt a strange liking for Monsieur de St. Gré.

"And now, Mr. Ritchie," he said, "will you tell me who you are, and how I can serve you?"

The servant had put the coffee on the table and left the room. Monsieur de St. Gré himself poured me a cup from the dainty, quaintly wrought *Louis Quinze* coffee-pot, graven with the coat of arms of his family. As we sat talking, my admiration for my host increased, for I found that he was familiar not only with the situation in Kentucky, but that he also knew far more than I of the principles and personnel of the new government of which General Washington was President. That he had little sympathy with government by the people was natural, for he was a Creole, and behind that a member of an order which detested republics. When we were got beyond these topics the rain had ceased, the night had fallen, the green candles had burned low. And suddenly, as he spoke of Les Îsles, I remembered the note Mademoiselle had given me for him, and I apologized for my forgetfulness. He read it, and dropped it with an exclamation.

"My daughter tells me that you have returned to her a miniature which she lost, Monsieur," he said.

"I had that pleasure," I answered.

"And that — you found this miniature at Madame Bouvet's. Was this the case?" And he stared hard at me.

I nodded, but for the life of me I could not speak. It seemed an outrage to lie to such a man. He did not answer, but sat lost in thought, drumming with his fingers on the tables until the noise of the slamming of a door aroused him to a listening posture. The sound of subdued voices came from the archway below us, and one of these, from an occasional excited and feminine note, I thought to be the *gardienne's*. Monsieur de St. Gré thrust back his chair, and in three strides was at the edge of the gallery.

"Auguste!" he cried.

Silence.

"Auguste, come up to me at once," he said in French.

Another silence, then something that sounded like "*Sapristi!*" a groan from the *gardienne*, and a step was heard on the stairway. My own discomfort increased, and I would have given much to be in any other place in the world. Auguste had arrived at the head of the steps but was apparently unable to get any farther.

"*Bon soir, mon père,*" he said.

"Like a dutiful son," said Monsieur de St. Gré, "you heard I was in town, and called to pay your respects, I am sure. I am delighted to find you. In fact, I came to town for that purpose."

"Lisette—" began Auguste.

"Thought that I did not wish to be disturbed, no doubt," said his father. "Walk in, Auguste."

Monsieur Auguste's slim figure appeared in the doorway. He caught sight of me, halted, backed, and stood staring with widened eyes. The candles threw their light across his shoulder on the face of the elder Monsieur de St. Gré. Auguste was a replica of his father, with the features minimized to regularity and the brow narrowed. The complexion of the one was a clear saffron, while the boy's skin was mottled, and he was not twenty.

"What is the matter?" said Monsieur de St. Gré.

"You—you have a visitor!" stammered Auguste, with a tact that savored of practice. Yet there was a sorry difference between this and the haughty young patrician who had sold me the miniature.

"Who brings me good news," said Monsieur de St. Gré, in English. "Mr. Ritchie, allow me to introduce my son, Auguste."

I felt Monsieur de St. Gré's eyes on me as I bowed, and I began to think I was in near as great a predicament as Auguste. Monsieur de St. Gré was managing the matter with infinite wisdom.

"Sit down, my son," he said; "you have no doubt been staying with your uncle." Auguste sat down, still staring. "Does your aunt's health mend?"

"She is better to-night, father," said the son, in English which might have been improved.

"I am glad of it," said Monsieur de St. Gré, taking a chair. "André, fill the glasses."

The silent, linen-clad mulatto poured out the Madeira, shot a look at Auguste, and retired softly.

"There has been a heavy rain, Monsieur," said Monsieur de St. Gré to me, "but I think the air is not yet cleared. I was about to say, Mr. Ritchie, when my son called to pay his respects, that the miniature of which we were speaking is one of the most remarkable paintings I have ever seen." Auguste's thin fingers were clutching the chair. "I have never beheld Mademoiselle Hélène de St. Gré, for my cousin, the Marquis, was not married when I left France. He was a captain in a regiment of his Majesty's Mousquetaires, since abolished. But I am sure that the likeness of Mademoiselle must be a true one, for it has the stamp of a remarkable personality, though Hélène can be only eighteen. Women, with us, mature quickly, Monsieur. And this portrait tallies with what I have heard of her character. You no doubt observed the face, Monsieur, — that of a true aristocrat. But I was speaking of her character. When she was twelve, she said something to a cardinal for which her mother made her keep her room a whole day. For Mademoiselle would not retract, and, *pardieu*, I believe his Eminence was wrong. The Marquise is afraid of her. And when first Hélène was presented formally she made such a witty retort to the Queen's sally that her Majesty insisted upon her coming to court. On every New Year's day I have always sent a present of coffee and périque to my cousin the Marquis, and it is Mademoiselle who writes to thank us. *Parole d'honneur*, her letters make me see again the people amongst whom she moves, — the dukes and duchesses, the cardinals, bishops, and generals. She draws them to the life, Monsieur, with a touch that makes them all ridiculous. His Majesty does not escape. God forgive him, he is indeed an amiable, weak person for calling a States General. And the Queen, a frivolous lady, but true to those whom she loves, and beginning now to realize the perils of the situation." He paused. "Is

it any wonder that Auguste has fallen in love with his cousin, Monsieur? That he loses his head, forgets that he is a gentleman, and steals her portrait from his sister!"

Had I not been so occupied with my own fate in the outcome of this inquisition, I should have been sorry for Auguste. And yet this feeling could not have lasted, for the young gentleman sprang to his feet, cast a glance at me which was not without malignance, and faced his father, his lips twitching with anger and fear. Monsieur de St. Gré sat undisturbed.

"He is so much in love with the portrait, Monsieur, that he loses it."

"Loses it!" cried Auguste.

"Precisely," said his father, dryly, "for Mr. Ritchie tells me he found it — at Madame Bouvet's, was it not, Monsieur?"

Auguste looked at me.

"*Mille diables!*" he said, and sat down again heavily.

"Mr. Ritchie has returned it to your sister, a service which puts him heavily in our debt," said Monsieur de St. Gré. "Now, sir," he added to me, rising, "you have had a tiresome day. I will show you to your room, and in the morning we will begin our — investigations."

He clapped his hands, the silent mulatto appeared with a new candle, and I followed my host down the gallery to a room which he flung open at the far end. A great four-poster bedstead was in one corner, and a polished mahogany dresser in the other.

"We have saved some of our family furniture from the fire, Mr. Ritchie," said Monsieur de St. Gré; "that bed was brought from Paris by my father forty years ago. I hope you will rest well."

He set the candle on the table, and as he bowed there was a trace of an enigmatical smile about his mouth. How much he knew of Auguste's transaction I could not fathom, but the matter and the scarcely creditable part I had played in it kept me awake far into the night. I was just falling into a troubled sleep when a footstep on

the gallery startled me back to consciousness. It was followed by a light tap on the door.

"Monsieur Reetchie," said a voice.

It was Monsieur Auguste. He was not an imposing figure in his nightrail, and by the light of the carefully shaded candle he held in his hand I saw that he had hitherto deceived me in the matter of his calves. He stood peering at me as I lay under the mosquito bar.

"How is it I can thank you, Monsieur!" he exclaimed in a whisper.

"By saying nothing, Monsieur," I answered.

"You are noble, you are generous, and — and one day I will give you the money back," he added with a burst of magniloquence. "You have behave very well, Monsieur, and I mek you my friend. Behol' Auguste de St. Gré, entirely at your service, Monsieur." He made a sweeping bow that might have been impressive save for the nightrail, and sought my hand, which he grasped in a fold of the mosquito bar.

"I am overcome, Monsieur," I said.

"Monsieur Reetchie, you are my friend, my intimate" (he put an aspirate on the word). "I go to tell you one leetle secret. I find that I can repose confidence in you. My father does not understan' me, you saw, Monsieur, he does not appreciate — that is the Engleesh. *Mon Dieu*, you saw it this night. I, who spik to you, am made for a courtier, a noble. I have the gift. La Louisiane — she is not so big enough for me." He lowered his voice still further, and bent nearer to me. "Monsieur, I run away to France. My cousin the Marquis will help me. You will hear of Auguste de St. Gré at Versailles, at Trianon, at Chantilly, and *peut-être* —"

"It is a worthy campaign, Monsieur," I interrupted.

A distant sound broke the stillness, and Auguste was near to dropping the candle on me.

"*Adieu*, Monsieur," he whispered; "*milles tonneres*, I have done one extraordinaire foolish thing when I am come to this house to-night."

And he disappeared, shading his candle, as he had come.

CHAPTER XIV

RETRIBUTION

During the next two days I had more evidence of Monsieur de St. Gré's ability, and, thanks to his conduct of my campaign, not the least suspicion of my mission to New Orleans got abroad. Certain gentlemen were asked to dine, we called on others, and met still others casually in their haunts of business or pleasure. I was troubled because of the inconvenience and discomfort to which my host put himself, for New Orleans in the dog-days may be likened in climate to the under side of the lid of a steam kettle. But at length, on the second evening, after we had supped on jambalaya and rice cakes and other dainties, and the last guest had gone, my host turned to me.

"The rest of the burrow is the same, Mr. Ritchie, until it comes to the light again."

"And the fox has crawled out of the other end," I said.

"Precisely," he answered, laughing; "in short, if you were to remain in New Orleans until New Year's, you would not learn a whit more. To-morrow morning I have a little business of my own to transact, and we shall get to Les Îles in time for dinner. No, don't thank me," he protested; "there's a certain rough honesty and earnestness ingrained in you which I like. And besides," he added, smiling, "you are poor indeed at thanking, Mr. Ritchie. You could never do it gracefully. But if ever I were in trouble, I believe that I might safely call on you."

The next day was a rare one, for a wind from somewhere had blown the moisture away a little, the shadows

were clearer cut, and by noon Monsieur de St. Gré and I were walking our horses in the shady road behind the levee. We were followed at a respectful distance by André, Monsieur's mulatto body-servant, and as we rode my companion gave me stories of the owners of the different plantations we passed, and spoke of many events of interest in the history of the colony. Presently he ceased to talk, and rode in silence for many minutes. And then he turned upon me suddenly.

"Mr. Ritchie," he said, "you have seen my son. It may be that in him I am paying the price of my sins. I have done everything to set him straight, but in vain. Monsieur, every son of the St. Grés has awakened sooner or later to a sense of what becomes him. But Auguste is a fool," he cried bitterly, — a statement which I could not deny; "were it not for my daughter, Antoinette, I should be a miserable man indeed."

Inasmuch as he was not a person of confidences, I felt the more flattered that he should speak so plainly to me, and I had a great sympathy for this strong man who could not help himself.

"You have observed Antoinette, Mr. Ritchie," he continued; "she is a strange mixture of wilfulness and caprice and self-sacrifice, and she has at times a bit of that wit which has made our house for generations the intimates — I may say — of sovereigns."

This peculiar pride of race would have amused me in another man. I found myself listening to Monsieur de St. Gré with gravity, and I did not dare to reply that I had had evidence of Mademoiselle's aptness of retort.

"She has been my companion since she was a child, Monsieur. She has disobeyed me, flaunted me, nursed me in illness, championed me behind my back. I have a little book which I have kept of her sayings and doings, which may interest you, Monsieur. I will show it you."

This indeed was a new side of Monsieur de St. Gré, and I reflected rather ruefully upon the unvarnished truth of what Mr. Wharton had told me, — ay, and what Colonel

Clark had emphasized long before. It was my fate never to be treated as a young man. It struck me that Monsieur de St. Gré had never even considered me in the light of a possible suitor for his daughter's hand.

"I should be delighted to see them, Monsieur," I answered.

"Would you?" he exclaimed, his face lighting up as he glanced at me. "Alas, Madame de St. Gré and I have promised to go to our neighbors', Monsieur and Madame Bertrand's, for to-night. But, to-morrow, if you have leisure, we shall look at it together. And not a word of this to my daughter, Monsieur," he added apprehensively; "she would never forgive me. She dislikes my talking of her, but at times I cannot help it. It was only last year that she was very angry with me, and would not speak to me for days, because I boasted of her having watched at the bedside of a poor gentleman who came here and got the fever. You will not tell her?"

"Indeed I shall not, Monsieur," I answered.

"It is strange," he said abruptly, "it is strange that this gentleman and his wife should likewise have had letters to us from Monsieur Gratiot. They came from St. Louis, and they were on their way to Paris."

"To Paris?" I cried; "what was their name?"

He looked at me in surprise.

"Clive," he said.

"Clive!" I cried, leaning towards him in my saddle. "Clive! And what became of them?"

This time he gave me one of his searching looks, and it was not unmixed with astonishment.

"Why do you ask, Monsieur?" he demanded. "Did you know them?"

I must have shown that I was strangely agitated. For the moment I could not answer.

"Monsieur Gratiot himself spoke of them to me," I said, after a little; "he said they were an interesting couple."

"*Pardieu!*" exclaimed Monsieur de St. Gré, "he put it mildly." He gave me another look. "There was something about them, Monsieur, which I could not fathom.

Why were they drifting? They were people of quality who had seen the world, who were by no means paupers, who had no cause to travel save a certain restlessness. And while they were awaiting the sailing of the packet for France they came to our house — the old one in the Rue Bourbon that was burned. I would not speak ill of the dead, but Mr. Clive I did not like. He fell sick of the fever in my house, and it was there that Antoinette and Madame de St. Gré took turns with his wife in watching at his bedside. I could do nothing with Antoinette, Monsieur, and she would not listen to my entreaties, my prayers, my commands. We buried the poor fellow in the alien ground, for he did not die in the Church, and after that my daughter clung to Mrs. Clive. She would not let her go, and the packet sailed without her. I have never seen such affection. I may say," he added quickly, "that Madame de St. Gré and I share in it, for Mrs. Clive is a lovable woman and a strong character. And into the great sorrow that lies behind her life, we have never probed."

"And she is with you now, Monsieur?" I asked.

"She lives with us, Monsieur," he answered simply, "and I hope for always. No," he said quickly, "it is not charity, — she has something of her own. We love her, and she is the best of companions for my daughter. For the rest, Monsieur, she seems benumbed, with no desire to go back or to go farther."

An entrance drive to the plantation of Les Îles, unknown to Nick and me, led off from the main road like a green tunnel arched out of the forest. My feelings as we entered this may be imagined, for I was suddenly confronted with the situation which I had dreaded since my meeting with Nick at Jonesboro. I could scarcely allow myself even the faint hope that Mrs. Clive might not prove to be Mrs. Temple after all. Whilst I was in this agony of doubt and indecision, the drive suddenly came out on a shaded lawn dotted with flowering bushes. There was the house with its gallery, its curved dormer roof and its belvedere; and a white, girlish figure flitted down the steps. It was Mademoiselle Antoinette, and no sooner

had her father dismounted than she threw herself into his arms. Forgetful of my presence, he stood murmuring in her ear like a lover; and as I watched them my trouble slipped from my mind, and gave place to a vaguer regret that I had been a wanderer throughout my life. Presently she turned up to him a face on which was written something which he could not understand. His own stronger features reflected a vague disquiet.

"What is it, *ma chérie?*"

What was it indeed? Something was in her eyes which bore a message and presentiment to me. She dropped them, fastening in the lapel of his coat a flaunting red flower set against a shining leaf, and there was a gentle, joyous subterfuge in her answer.

"Thou pardoned Auguste, as I commanded?" she said. They were speaking in the familiar French.

"*Ha, diable!* is it that which disquiets thee?" said her father. "We will not speak of Auguste. Dost thou know Monsieur Ritchie, 'Toinette?"

She disengaged herself and dropped me a courtesy, her eyes seeking the ground. But she said not a word. At that instant Madame de St. Gré herself appeared on the gallery, followed by Nick, who came down the steps with a careless self-confidence to greet the master. Indeed, a stranger might have thought that Mr. Temple was the host, and I saw Antoinette watching him furtively with a gleam of amusement in her eyes.

"I am delighted to see you at last, Monsieur," said my cousin. "I am Nicholas Temple, and I have been your guest for three days."

Had Monsieur de St. Gré been other than the soul of hospitality, it would have been impossible not to welcome such a guest. Our host had, in common with his daughter, a sense of humor. There was a quizzical expression on his fine face as he replied, with the barest glance at Mademoiselle Antoinette: —

"I trust you have been — well entertained, Mr. Temple. My daughter has been accustomed only to the society of her brother and cousins."

"Faith, I should not have supposed it," said Nick, instantly, a remark which caused the color to flush deeply into Mademoiselle's face. I looked to see Monsieur de St. Gré angry. He tried, indeed, to be grave, but smiled irresistibly as he mounted the steps to greet his wife, who stood demurely awaiting his caress. And in this interval Mademoiselle shot at Nick a swift and withering look as she passed him. He returned a grimace.

"Messieurs," said Monsieur de St. Gré, turning to us, "dinner will soon be ready — if you will be so good as to pardon me until then."

Nick followed Mademoiselle with his eyes until she had disappeared beyond the hall. She did not so much as turn. Then he took me by the arm and led me to a bench under a magnolia a little distance away, where he seated himself, and looked up at me despairingly.

"Behold," said he, "what was once your friend and cousin, your counsellor, sage, and guardian. Behold the clay which conducted you hither, with the heart neatly but painfully extracted. Look upon a woman's work, Davy, and shun the sex. I tell you it is better to go blindfold through life, to have — pardon me — your own blunt features, than to be reduced to such a pitiable state. Was ever such a refinement of cruelty practised before? Never! Was there ever such beauty, such archness, such coquetry, — such damned elusiveness? Never! If there is a cargo going up the river, let me be salted and lie at the bottom of it. I'll warrant you I'll not come to life."

"You appear to have suffered somewhat," I said, forgetting for the moment in my laughter the thing that weighed upon my mind.

"Suffered!" he cried; "I have been tossed high in the azure that I might sink the farther into the depths. I have been put in a grave, the earth stamped down, resurrected, and flung into the dust-heap. I have been taken up to the gate of heaven and dropped a hundred and fifty years through darkness. Since I have seen you I have been the round of all the bright places and all the bottomless pits in the firmament."

"It seems to have made you literary," I remarked judicially.

"I burn up twenty times a day," he continued, with a wave of the hand to express the completeness of the process; "there is nothing left. I see her, I speak to her, and I burn up."

"Have you had many *tête-à-têtes?*" I asked.

"Not one," he retorted fiercely; "do you think there is any sense in the damnable French custom? I am an honorable man, and, besides, I am not equipped for an elopement. No priest in Louisiana would marry us. I see her at dinner, at supper. Sometimes we sew on the gallery," he went on, "but I give you my oath that I have not had one word with her alone."

"An oath is not necessary," I said. "But you seem to have made some progress nevertheless."

"Do you call that progress?" he demanded.

"It is surely not retrogression."

"God knows what it is," said Nick, helplessly, "but it's got to stop. I have sent her an ultimatum."

"A what?"

"A summons. Her father and mother are going to the Bertrands' to-night, and I have written her a note to meet me in the garden. And you," he cried, rising and slapping me between the shoulders, "you are to keep watch, like the dear, careful, canny, sly rascal you are."

"And — and has she accepted?" I inquired.

"That's the deuce of it," said he; "she has not. But I think she'll come."

I stood for a moment regarding him.

"And you really love Mademoiselle Antoinette?" I asked.

"Have I not exhausted the language?" he answered. "If what I have been through is not love, then may the Lord shield me from the real disease."

"It may have been merely a light case of — tropical enthusiasm, let us say. I have seen others, a little milder because the air was more temperate."

"Tropical — balderdash," he exploded. "If you are not the most exasperating, unfeeling man alive — "

"I merely wanted to know if you wished to marry Mademoiselle de St. Gré," I interrupted.

He gave me a look of infinite tolerance.

"Have I not made it plain that I cannot live without her?" he said; "if not, I will go over it all again."

"That will not be necessary," I said hastily.

"The trouble may be," he continued, "that they have already made one of their matrimonial contracts with a Granpré, a Beauséjour, a Bernard."

"Monsieur de St. Gré is a very sensible man," I answered. "He loves his daughter, and I doubt if he would force her to marry against her will. Tell me, Nick," I asked, laying my hand upon his shoulder, "do you love this girl so much that you would let nothing come between you and her?"

"I tell you, I do; and again I tell you, I do," he replied. He paused, suddenly glancing at my face, and added, "Why do you ask, Davy?"

I stood irresolute, now that the time had come not daring to give voice to my suspicions. He had not spoken to me of his mother save that once, and I had no means of knowing whether his feeling for the girl might not soften his anger against her. I have never lacked the courage to come to the point, but there was still the chance that I might be mistaken in this after all. Would it not be best to wait until I had ascertained in some way the identity of Mrs. Clive? And while I stood debating, Nick regarding me with a puzzled expression, Monsieur de St. Gré appeared on the gallery.

"Come, gentlemen," he cried; "dinner awaits us."

The dining room at Les Îles was at the corner of the house, and its windows looked out on the gallery, which was shaded at that place by dense foliage. The room, like others in the house, seemed to reflect the decorous character of its owner. Two St. Grés, indifferently painted, but rigorous and respectable, relieved the white-

ness of the wall. They were the Commissary-general and his wife. The lattices were closed on one side, and in the deep amber light the family silver shone but dimly. The dignity of our host, the evident ceremony of the meal, — which was attended by three servants, — would have awed into a modified silence at least a less irrepressible person than Nicholas Temple. But Nick was one to carry by storm a position which another might wait to reconnoitre. The first sensation of our host was no doubt astonishment, but he was soon laughing over a vivid account of our adventures on the keel boat. Nick's imitation of Xavier, and his description of Benjy's terrors after the storm, were so perfect that I laughed quite as heartily; and Madame de St. Gré wiped her eyes and repeated continually, "*Quel drôle monsieur!* it is thus he has entertained us since thou departed, Philippe."

As for Mademoiselle, I began to think that Nick was not far wrong in his diagnosis. Training may have had something to do with it. She would not laugh, not she, but once or twice she raised her napkin to her face and coughed slightly. For the rest, she sat demurely, with her eyes on her plate, a model of propriety. Nick's sufferings became more comprehensible.

To give the devil his due, Nick had an innate tact which told him when to stop, and perhaps at this time Mademoiselle's superciliousness made him subside the more quickly. After Monsieur de St. Gré had explained to me the horrors of the indigo pest and the futility of sugar raising, he turned to his daughter.

"'Toinette, where is Madame Clive?" he asked.

The girl looked up, startled into life and interest at once.

"Oh, papa," she cried in French, "we are so worried about her, mamma and I. It was the day you went away, the day these gentlemen came, that we thought she would take an airing. And suddenly she became worse."

Monsieur de St. Gré turned with concern to his wife.

"I do not know what it is, Philippe," said that lady; "it seems to be mental. The loss of her husband weighs upon her, poor lady. But this is worse than ever, and she

will lie for hours with her face turned to the wall, and not even Antoinette can arouse her."

"I have always been able to comfort her before," said Antoinette, with a catch in her voice.

I took little account of what was said after that, my only notion being to think the problem out for myself, and alone. As I was going to my room Nick stopped me.

"Come into the garden, Davy," he said.

"When I have had my siesta," I answered.

"When you have had your siesta!" he cried; "since when did you begin to indulge in siestas?"

"To-day," I replied, and left him staring after me.

I reached my room, bolted the door, and lay down on my back to think. Little was needed to convince me now that Mrs. Clive was Mrs. Temple, and thus the lady's relapse when she heard that her son was in the house was accounted for. Instead of forming a plan, my thoughts drifted from that into pity for her, and my memory ran back many years to the text of good Mr. Mason's sermon, "I have refined thee, but not with silver, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." What must Sarah Temple have suffered since those days! I remembered her in her prime, in her beauty, in her selfishness, in her cruelty to those whom she might have helped, and I wondered the more at the change which must have come over the woman that she had won the affections of this family, that she had gained the untiring devotion of Mademoiselle Antoinette. Her wit might not account for it, for that had been cruel. And something of the agony of the woman's soul as she lay in torment, facing the wall, thinking of her son under the same roof, of a life misspent and irrevocable, I pictured.

A stillness crept into the afternoon like the stillness of night. The wide house was darkened and silent, and without a sunlight washed with gold filtered through the leaves. There was a drowsy hum of bees, and in the distance the occasional languishing note of a bird singing what must have been a cradle-song. My mind wandered, and shirked the task that was set to it.

Could anything be gained by meddling? I had begun to convince myself that nothing could, when suddenly I came face to face with the consequences of a possible marriage between Nick and Mademoiselle Antoinette. In that event the disclosure of his mother's identity would be inevitable. Not only his happiness was involved, but Mademoiselle's, her father's and her mother's, and lastly that of this poor hunted woman herself, who thought at last to have found a refuge.

An hour passed, and it became more and more evident to me that I must see and talk with Mrs. Temple. But how was I to communicate with her? At last I took out my portfolio and wrote these words on a sheet: —

"*If Mrs. Clive will consent to a meeting with Mr. David Ritchie, he will deem it a favor. Mr. Ritchie assures Mrs. Clive that he makes this request in all friendliness.*"

I lighted a candle, folded the note and sealed it, addressed it to Mrs. Clive, and opening the latticed door I stepped out. Walking along the gallery until I came to the rear part of the house which faced towards the outbuildings, I spied three figures prone on the grass under a pecan tree that shaded the kitchen roof. One of these figures was Benjy, and he was taking his siesta. I descended quietly from the gallery, and making my way to him, touched him on the shoulder. He awoke and stared at me with white eyes.

"Marse Dave!" he cried.

"Hush," I answered, "and follow me."

He came after me, wondering, a little way into the grove, where I stopped.

"Benjy," I said, "do you know any of the servants here?"

"Lawsy, Marse Dave, I reckon I knows 'em, — some of 'em," he answered with a grin.

"You talk to them?"

"Shucks, no, Marse Dave," he replied with a fine scorn, "I ain't no hand at dat ar nigger French. But I knows some on 'em, and right well too."

"How?" I demanded curiously.

Benjy looked down sheepishly at his feet. He was standing pigeon-toed.

"I done c'ressed some on 'em, Marse Dave," he said at length, and there was a note of triumph in his voice.

"You did what?" I asked.

"I done kissed one of dem yaller gals, Marse Dave. Yass'r, I done kissed M'lisse."

"Do you think Mélisse would do something for you if you asked her?" I inquired.

Benjy seemed hurt.

"Marse Dave — " he began reproachfully.

"Very well, then," I interrupted, taking the letter from my pocket, "there is a lady who is ill here, Mrs. Clive — "

I paused, for a new look had come into Benjy's eyes. He began that peculiar, sympathetic laugh of the negro, which catches and doubles on itself, and I imagined that a new admiration for me dawned on his face.

"Yass'r, yass, Marse Dave, I reckon M'lisse 'll git it to her 'thout any one tekin' notice."

I bit my lips.

"If Mrs. Clive receives this within an hour, Mélisse shall have one piastre, and you another. There is an answer."

Benjy took the note, and departed nimbly to find Mélisse, while I paced up and down in my uneasiness as to the outcome of the experiment. A quarter of an hour passed, half an hour, and then I saw Benjy coming through the trees. He stood before me, chuckling, and drew from his pocket a folded piece of paper. I gave him the two piastres, warned him if his master or any one inquired for me that I was taking a walk, and bade him begone. Then I opened the note.

"*I will meet you at the bayou at seven this evening. Take the path that leads through the garden.*"

I read it with a catch of the breath, with a certainty that the happiness of many people depended upon what I should say at that meeting. And to think of this and to compose myself a little, I made my way to the garden in search of the path, that might know it when the time

came. Entering a gap in the hedge, I caught sight of the shaded seat under the tree which had been the scene of our first meeting with Antoinette, and I hurried past it as I crossed the garden. There were two openings in the opposite hedge, the one through which Nick and I had come, and another. I took the second, and with little difficulty found the path of which the note had spoken. It led through a dense, semi-tropical forest in the direction of the swamp beyond, the way being well beaten, but here and there jealously crowded by an undergrowth of brambles and the prickly Spanish bayonet. I know not how far I had walked, my head bent in thought, before I felt the ground teetering under my feet, and there was the bayou. It was a narrow lane of murky, impenetrable water, shaded now by the forest wall. Imaged on its amber surface were the twisted boughs of the cypresses of the swamp beyond, — boughs funereally draped, as though to proclaim a warning of unknown perils in the dark places. On that side where I stood ancient oaks thrust their gnarled roots into the water, and these knees were bridged by treacherous platforms of moss. As I sought for a safe resting-place a dull splash startled me, the pink-and-white water lilies danced on the ripples, and a long, black snout pushed its way to the centre of the bayou and floated there motionless.

I sat down on a wide knee that seemed to be fashioned for the purpose, and reflected. It may have been about half-past five, and I made up my mind that, rather than return and risk explanations, I would wait where I was until Mrs. Temple appeared. I had much to think of, and for the rest the weird beauty of the place, with its changing colors as the sun fell, held me in fascination. When the blue vapor stole through the cypress swamp, my trained ear caught the faintest of warning sounds. Mrs. Temple was coming.

I could not repress the exclamation that rose to my lips when she stood before me.

"I have changed somewhat," she began quite calmly; "I have changed since you were at Temple Bow."

I stood staring at her, at a loss to know whether by these words she sought to gain an advantage. I knew not whether to pity or to be angry, such a strange blending she seemed of former pride and arrogance and later suffering. There were the features of the beauty still, the eyes defiant, the lips scornful. Sorrow had set its brand upon this protesting face in deep, violet marks under the eyes, in lines which no human power could erase: sorrow had flecked with white the gold of the hair, had proclaimed her a woman with a history. For she had a new and remarkable beauty which puzzled and astonished me,—a beauty in which maternity had no place. The figure, gowned with an innate taste in black, still kept the rounded lines of the young woman, while about the shoulders and across the open throat a lace mantilla was thrown. She stood facing me, undaunted, and I knew that she had come to fight for what was left her. I knew further that she was no mean antagonist.

"Will you kindly tell me to what circumstance I owe the honor of this — summons, Mr. Ritchie?" she asked. "You are a travelled person for one so young. I might almost say," she added with an indifferent laugh, "that there is some method and purpose in your travels."

"Indeed, you do me wrong, Madame," I replied; "I am here by the merest chance."

Again she laughed lightly, and stepping past me took her seat on the oak from which I had risen. I marvelled that this woman, with all her self-possession, could be the same as she who had held her room, cowering, these four days past. Admiration for her courage mingled with my other feelings, and for the life of me I knew not where to begin. My experience with women of the world was, after all, distinctly limited. Mrs. Temple knew, apparently by intuition, the advantage she had gained, and she smiled.

"The Ritchies were always skilled in dealing with sinners," she began; "the first earl had the habit of hunting them like foxes, so it is said. I take it for granted that, before my sentence is pronounced, I shall have the pleasure

of hearing my wrong-doings in detail. I could not ask you to forego that satisfaction."

"You seem to know the characteristics of my family, Mrs. Temple," I answered. "There is one trait of the Ritchies concerning which I ask your honest opinion."

"And what is that?" she said carelessly.

"I have always understood that they have spoken the truth. Is it not so?"

She glanced at me curiously.

"I never knew your father to lie," she answered; "but after all he had few chances. He so seldom spoke."

"Your intercourse with me at Temple Bow was quite as limited," I said.

"Ah," she interrupted quickly, "you bear me that grudge. It is another trait of the Ritchies."

"I bear you no grudge, Madame," I replied. "I asked you a question concerning the veracity of my family, and I beg that you will believe what I say."

"And what is this momentous statement?" she asked.

I had hard work to keep my temper, but I knew that I must not lose it.

"I declare to you on my honor that my business in New Orleans in no way concerns you, and that I had not the slightest notion of finding you here. Will you believe that?"

"And what then?" she asked.

"I also declare to you that, since meeting your son, my chief anxiety has been lest he should run across you."

"You are very considerate of others," she said. "Let us admit for the sake of argument that you come here by accident."

It was the opening I had sought for, but despaired of getting.

"Then put yourself for a moment in my place, Madame, and give me credit for a little kindliness of feeling, and a sincere affection for your son."

There was a new expression on her face, and the light of a supreme effort in her eyes.

"I give you credit at least for a logical mind," she

answered. "In spite of myself you have put me at the bar and seem to be conducting my trial."

"I do not see why there should be any rancor between us," I answered. "It is true that I hated you at Temple Bow. When my father was killed and I was left a homeless orphan you had no pity for me, though your husband was my mother's brother. But you did me a good turn after all, for you drove me out into a world where I learned to rely upon myself. Furthermore, it was not in your nature to treat me well."

"Not in my nature?" she repeated.

"You were seeking happiness, as every one must in their own way. That happiness lay, apparently, with Mr. Riddle."

"Ah," she cried, with a catch of her breath, "I thought you would be judging me."

"I am stating facts. Your son was a sufficient embarrassment in this matter, and I should have been an additional one. I blame you not, Mrs. Temple, for anything you have done to me, but I blame you for embittering Nick's life."

"And he?" she said. It seemed to me that I detected a faltering in her voice.

"I will hide nothing from you. He blames you, with what justice I leave you to decide."

She did not answer this, but turned her head away towards the bayou. Nor could I determine what was in her mind.

"And now I ask you whether I have acted as your friend in begging you to meet me."

She turned to me swiftly at that.

"I am at a loss to see how there can be friendship between us, Mr. Ritchie," she said.

"Very good then, Madame; I am sorry," I answered. "I have done all that is in my power, and now events will have to take their course."

I had not gone two steps into the wood before I heard her voice calling my name. She had risen, and leaned with her hand against the oak.

"Does Nick — know that you are here?" she cried.

"No," I answered shortly. Then I realized suddenly what I had failed to grasp before, — she feared that I would pity her.

"David!"

I started violently at the sound of my name, at the new note in her voice, at the change in the woman as I turned. And then before I realized what she had done she had come to me swiftly and laid her hand upon my arm.

"David, does he hate me?"

All the hope remaining in her life was in that question, was in her face as she searched mine with a terrible scrutiny. And never had I known such an ordeal. It seemed as if I could not answer, and as I stood staring back at her a smile was forced to her lips.

"I will pay you one tribute, my friend," she said; "you are honest."

But even as she spoke I saw her sway, and though I could not be sure it were not a dizziness in me, I caught her. I shall always marvel at the courage there was in her, for she straightened and drew away from me a little proudly, albeit gently, and sat down on the knee of the oak, looking across the bayou towards the mist of the swamp. There was the infinite calmness of resignation in her next speech.

"Tell me about him," she said.

She was changed indeed. Were it not so I should have heard of her own sufferings, of her poor, hunted life from place to place, of countless nights made sleepless by the past. Pride indeed was left, but the fire had burned away the last vestige of selfishness.

I sat down beside her, knowing full well that I should be judged by what I said. She listened, motionless, though something of what that narrative cost her I knew by the current of sympathy that ran now between us. Unmarked, the day faded, a new light was spread over the waters, the mist was spangled with silver points, the Spanish moss took on the whiteness of lace against the black forest-

swamp, and on the yellow face of the moon the star-shaped leaves of a gum were printed.

At length I paused. She neither spoke, nor moved — save for the rising and falling of her shoulders. The hardest thing I had to say I saved for the last, and I was near lacking the courage to continue.

"There is Mademoiselle Antoinette — " I began, and stopped, — she turned on me so quickly and laid a hand on mine.

"Nick loves her!" she cried.

"You know it!" I exclaimed, wondering.

"Ah, David," she answered brokenly, "I foresaw it from the first. I, too, love the girl. No human being has ever given me such care and such affection. She — she is all that I have left. Must I give her up? Have I not paid the price of my sins?"

I did not answer, knowing that she saw the full cruelty of the predicament. What happiness remained to her now of a battered life stood squarely in the way of her son's happiness. That was the issue, and no advice or aid of mine could change it. There was another silence that seemed to me an eternity as I watched, a helpless witness, the struggle going on within her. At last she got to her feet, her face turned to the shadow.

"I will go, David," she said. Her voice was low and she spoke with a steadiness that alarmed me. "I will go."

Torn with pity, I thought again, but I could see no alternative. And then, suddenly, she was clinging to me, her courage gone, her breast shaken with sobs. "Where shall I go?" she cried. "God help me! Are there no remote places where He will not seek me out? I have tried them all, David." And quite as suddenly she disengaged herself, and looked at me strangely. "You are well revenged for Temple Bow," she said.

"Hush," I answered, and held her, fearing I knew not what, "you have not lacked courage. It is not so bad as you believe. I will devise a plan and help you. Have you money?"

"Yes," she answered, with a remnant of her former pride; "and I have an annuity paid now to Mr. Clark."

"Then listen to what I say," I answered. "To-night I will take you to New Orleans and hide you safely. And I swear to you, whether it be right or wrong, that I will use every endeavor to change Nick's feelings towards you. Come," I continued, leading her gently into the path, "let us go while there is yet time."

"Stop," she said, and I halted fearfully. "David Ritchie, you are a good man. I can make no amends to you," — she did not finish.

Feeling for the path in the blackness of the wood, I led her by the hand, and she followed me as trustfully as a child. At last, after an age of groping, the heavy scents of shrubs and flowers stole to us on the night air, and we came out at the hedge into what seemed a blaze of light that flooded the rows of color. Here we paused, breathless, and looked. The bench under the great tree was vacant, and the garden was empty.

It was she who led the way through the hedge, who halted in the garden path at the sound of voices. She turned, but there was no time to flee, for the tall figure of a man came through the opposite hedge, followed by a lady. One was Nicholas Temple, the other, Mademoiselle de St. Gré. Mrs. Temple's face alone was in the shadow, and as I felt her hand trembling on my arm I summoned all my resources. It was Nick who spoke first.

"It is Davy!" he cried. "Oh, the sly rascal! And this is the promenade of which he left us word, the solitary meditation! Speak up, man; you are forgiven for deserting us."

He turned, laughing, to Mademoiselle. But she stood with her lips parted and her hands dropped, staring at my companion. Then she took two steps forward and stopped with a cry.

"Mrs. Clive!"

The woman beside me turned, and with a supreme courage raised her head and faced the girl.

"Yes, Antoinette, it is I," she answered.

And then my eyes sought Nick, for Mrs. Temple had faced her son with a movement that was a challenge, yet with a look that questioned, yearned, appealed. He, too, stared, the laughter fading from his eyes, first astonishment, and then anger, growing in them, slowly, surely. I shall never forget him as he stood there (for what seemed an age) recalling one by one the wrongs this woman had done him. She herself had taught him to brook no restraint, to follow impetuously his loves and hates, and endurance in these things was moulded in every line of his finely cut features. And when he spoke it was not to her, but to the girl at his side.

"Do you know who this is?" he said. "Tell me, do you know this woman?"

Mademoiselle de St. Gré did not answer him. She drew near, gently, to Mrs. Temple, whose head was bowed, whose agony I could only guess.

"Mrs. Clive," she said softly, though her voice was shaken by a prescience, "won't you tell me what has happened? Won't you speak to me — Antoinette?"

The poor lady lifted up her arms, as though to embrace the girl, dropped them despairingly, and turned away.

"Antoinette," she murmured, "Antoinette!"

For Nick had seized Antoinette by the hand, restraining her.

"You do not know what you are doing?" he cried angrily. "Listen!"

I had stood bereft of speech, watching the scene breathlessly. And now I would have spoken had not Mademoiselle astonished me by taking the lead. I have thought since that I might have pieced together this much of her character. Her glance at Nick surprised him momentarily into silence.

"I know that she is my dearest friend," she said, "that she came to us in misfortune, and that we love her and trust her. I do not know why she is here with Mr. Ritchie, but I am sure it is for some good reason." She laid a hand on Mrs. Temple's shoulder. "Mrs. Clive, won't you speak to me?"

"My God, Antoinette, listen!" cried Nick; "Mrs. Clive is not her name. I know her, David knows her. She is an — adventuress!"

Mrs. Temple gave a cry, and the girl shot at him a frightened, bewildered glance, in which a new-born love struggled with an older affection.

"An adventuress!" she repeated, her hand dropping, "oh, I do not believe it. I cannot believe it."

"You shall believe it," said Nick, fiercely. "Her name is not Clive. Ask David what her name is."

Antoinette's lips moved, but she shirked the question. And Nick seized me roughly.

"Tell her," he said, "tell her! My God, how can I do it? Tell her, David."

For the life of me I could not frame the speech at once, my pity and a new-found and surprising respect for her making it doubly hard to pronounce her sentence. Suddenly she raised her head, not proudly, but with a dignity seemingly conferred by years of sorrow and of suffering. Her tones were even, bereft of every vestige of hope.

"Antoinette, I have deceived you, though as God is my witness, I thought no harm could come of it. I deluded myself into believing that I had found friends and a refuge at last. I am Mrs. Temple."

"Mrs. Temple!" The girl repeated the name sorrowfully, but perplexedly, not grasping its full significance.

"She is my mother," said Nick, with a bitterness I had not thought in him, "she is my mother, or I would curse her. For she has ruined my life and brought shame on a good name."

He paused, his breath catching for very anger. Mrs. Temple hid her face in her hands, while the girl shrank back in terror. I grasped him by the arm.

"Have you no compassion?" I cried. But Mrs. Temple interrupted me.

"He has the right," she faltered; "it is my just punishment."

He tore himself away, and took a step to her.

"Where is Riddle?" he cried. "As God lives, I will kill him without mercy!"

His mother lifted her head again.

"God has judged him," she said quietly; "he is beyond your vengeance — he is dead." A sob shook her, but she conquered it with a marvellous courage. "Harry Riddle loved me, he was kind to me, and he was a better man than John Temple."

Nick recoiled. The fierceness of his anger seemed to go, leaving a more dangerous humor.

"Then I have been blessed with parents," he said.

At that she swayed, but when I would have caught her she motioned me away and turned to Antoinette. Twice Mrs. Temple tried to speak.

"I — I was going away to-night," she said at length, "and you would never have seen or heard of me more. My nephew David — Mr. Ritchie — whom I treated cruelly as a boy, had pity on me. He is a good man, and he was to have taken me away — I do not attempt to defend myself, my dear, but I pray that you, who have so much charity, will some day think a little kindly of one who has sinned deeply, of one who will love and bless you and yours to her dying day."

She faltered, and Nick would have spoken had not Antoinette herself stayed him with a gesture.

"I wish — my son to know the little there is on my side. It is not much. Yet God may not spare him the sorrow that brings pity. I — I loved Harry Riddle as a girl. My father was ruined, and I was forced into marriage with John Temple for his possessions. He was selfish, overbearing, cruel — unfaithful. During the years I lived with him he never once spoke kindly to me. I, too, grew wicked and selfish and heedless. My head was turned by admiration. Mr. Temple escaped to England in a man-of-war; he left me without a line of warning, of farewell. I — I have wandered over the earth, haunted by remorse, and I knew no moment of peace, of happiness, until you brought me here and sheltered and loved me. And even here I have had many sleepless hours. A hundred times

I have summoned my courage to tell you, — I could not. I am justly punished, Antoinette." She moved a little, timidly, towards the girl, who stood motionless, dazed by what she heard. She held out a hand, appealingly, and dropped it. "Good-by, my dear ; God will bless you for your kindness to an unfortunate outcast."

She glanced with a kind of terror in her eyes from the girl to Nick, and what she meant to say concerning their love I know not, for the flood, held back so long, burst upon her. She wept as I have never seen a woman weep. And then, before Nick or I knew what had happened, Antoinette had taken her swiftly in her arms and was murmuring in her ear: —

"You shall not go. You shall not. You will live with me always."

Presently the sobs ceased, and Mrs. Temple raised her face, slowly, wonderingly, as if she had not heard aright. And she tried gently to push the girl away.

"No, Antoinette," she said, "I have done you harm enough."

But the girl clung to her strongly, passionately. "I do not care what you have done," she cried, "you are good now. I know that you are good now. I will not cast you out. I will not."

I stood looking at them, bewildered and astonished by Mademoiselle's loyalty. She seemed to have forgotten Nick, as had I, and then as I turned to him he came towards them. Almost roughly he took Antoinette by the arm.

"You do not know what you are saying," he cried. "Come away, Antoinette, you do not know what she has done — you cannot realize what she is."

Antoinette shrank away from him, still clinging to Mrs. Temple. There was a fearless directness in her look which might have warned him.

"She is your mother," she said quietly.

"My mother!" he repeated ; "yes, I will tell you what a mother she has been to me — "

"Nick!"

It passes my power to write down the pity of that appeal, the hopelessness of it, the yearning in it. Freeing herself from the girl, Mrs. Temple took one step towards him, her arms held up. I had not thought that his hatred of her was deep enough to resist it. It was Antoinette whose intuition divined this ere he had turned away.

"You have chosen between me and her," he said; and before we could get the poor lady to the seat under the oak, he had left the garden. In my perturbation I glanced at Antoinette, but there was no other sign in her face save of tenderness for Mrs. Temple.

Mrs. Temple had mercifully fainted. As I crossed the lawn I saw two figures in the deep shadow beside the gallery, and I heard Nick's voice giving orders to Benjy to pack and saddle. When I reached the garden again the girl had loosed Mrs. Temple's gown, and was bending over her, murmuring in her ear.

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Many hours later, when the moon was waning towards the horizon, fearful of surprise by the coming day, I was riding slowly under the trees on the road to New Orleans. Beside me, veiled in black, her head bowed, was Mrs. Temple, and no word had escaped her since she had withdrawn herself gently from the arms of Antoinette on the gallery at Les Îles. Nick had gone long before. The hardest task had been to convince the girl that Mrs. Temple might not stay. After that Antoinette had busied herself, with a silent fortitude I had not thought was in her, making ready for the lady's departure. I shall never forget her as she stood, a slender figure of sorrow, looking down at us, the tears glistening on her cheeks. And I could not resist the impulse to mount the steps once more.

"You were right, Antoinette," I whispered; "whatever happens, you will remember that I am your friend. And I will bring him back to you if I can."

She pressed my hand, and turned and went slowly into the house.

BOOK III

LOUISIANA

CHAPTER I

THE RIGHTS OF MAN

WERE these things which follow to my thinking not extraordinary, I should not write them down here, nor should I have presumed to skip nearly five years of time. For indeed almost five years had gone by since the warm summer night when I rode into New Orleans with Mrs. Temple. And in all that time I had not so much as laid eyes on my cousin and dearest friend, her son. I searched New Orleans for him in vain, and learned too late that he had taken passage on a packet which had dropped down the river the next morning, bound for Charleston and New York.

I have an instinct that this is not the place to relate in detail what occurred to me before leaving New Orleans. Suffice it to say that I made my way back through the swamps, the forests, the cane-brakes of the Indian country, along the Natchez trail to Nashville, across the barrens to Harrodstown in Kentucky, where I spent a week in that cabin which had so long been for me a haven of refuge. Dear Polly Ann! She hugged me as though I were still the waif whom she had mothered, and wept over the little presents which I had brought the children. Harrodstown was changed, new cabins and new faces met me at every turn, and Tom, more disgruntled than ever, had gone a-hunting with Mr. Boone far into the wilderness.

I went back to Louisville to take up once more the struggle for practice, and I do not intend to charge so

much as a page with what may be called the even tenor of my life. I was not a man to get into trouble on my own account. Louisville grew amazingly; white frame houses were built, and even brick ones. And ere Kentucky became a State, in 1792, I had gone as delegate to more than one of the Danville Conventions.

Among the nations, as you know, a storm raged, and the great swells from that conflict threatened to set adrift and wreck the little republic but newly launched. The noise of the tramping of great armies across the Old World shook the New, and men in whom the love of fierce fighting was born were stirred to quarrel among themselves. The Rights of Man! How many wrongs have been done under that clause! The Bastille stormed; the Swiss Guard slaughtered; the Reign of Terror, with its daily procession of tumbrels through the streets of Paris; the murder of that amiable and well-meaning gentleman who did his best to atone for the sins of his ancestors; the fearful months of waiting suffered by his Queen before she, too, went to her death. Often as I lighted my candle of an evening in my little room to read of these things so far away, I would drop my *Kentucky Gazette* to think of a woman whose face I remembered, to wonder sadly whether Hélène de St. Gré were among the lists. In her, I was sure, was personified that courage for which her order will go down eternally through the pages of history, and in my darker moments I pictured her standing beside the guillotine with a smile that haunted me.

The hideous image of that strife was reflected amongst our own people. Budget after budget was hurried by the winds across the sea. And swift couriers carried the news over the Blue Wall by the Wilderness Trail (widened now), and thundered through the little villages of the Blue Grass country to the Falls. What interest, you will say, could the pioneer lawyers and storekeepers and planters have in the French Revolution? The Rights of Man! Down with kings! General Washington and Mr. Adams and Mr. Hamilton might sigh for them, but they were not for the free-born pioneers of the West. *Citizen*

was the proper term now, — Citizen General Wilkinson when that magnate came to town, resplendent in his brigadier's uniform. It was thought that Mr. Wilkinson would plot less were he in the army under the watchful eye of his superiors. Little they knew him! Thus the Republic had a reward for adroitness, for treachery, and treason. But what reward had it for the lonely, embittered, stricken man whose genius and courage had gained for it the great Northwest territory? What reward had the Republic for him who sat brooding in his house above the Falls — for Citizen General Clark?

In those days you were not a Federalist or a Democrat, you were an Aristocrat or a Jacobin. The French parties were our parties; the French issue, our issue. Under the patronage of that saint of American Jacobinism, Thomas Jefferson, a Jacobin society was organized in Philadelphia, — special guardians of Liberty. And flying on the March winds over the mountains the seed fell on the black soil of Kentucky: Lexington had its Jacobin society, Danville and Louisville likewise their patrons and protectors of the Rights of Mankind. Federalists were not guillotined in Kentucky in the summer of 1793, but I might mention more than one who was shot.

In spite of the Federalists, Louisville prospered, and incidentally I prospered in a mild way. Mr. Crede, behind whose store I still lived, was getting rich, and happened to have an affair of some importance in Philadelphia. Mr. Wharton was kind enough to recommend a young lawyer who had the following virtues: he was neither handsome nor brilliant, and he wore snuff-colored clothes. Mr. Wharton also did me the honor to say that I was cautious and painstaking, and had a habit of tiring out my adversary. Therefore, in the early summer of 1793, I went to Philadelphia. At that time, travellers embarking on such a journey were prayed over as though they were going to Tartary. I was absent from Louisville near a year, and there is a diary of what I saw and felt and heard on this trip for the omission of which I will be thanked. The great news of that day which concerns the world — and

incidentally this story — was that Citizen Genêt had landed at Charleston.

Citizen Genêt, Ambassador of the great Republic of France to the little Republic of America, landed at Charleston, acclaimed by thousands, and lost no time. Scarcely had he left that city ere American privateers had slipped out of Charleston harbor to prey upon the commerce of the hated Mistress of the Sea. Was there ever such a march of triumph as that of the Citizen Ambassador northward to the capital? Everywhere toasted and feasted, Monsieur Genêt did not neglect the Rights of Man, for without doubt the United States was to declare war on Britain within a fortnight. Nay, the Citizen Ambassador would go into the halls of Congress and declare war himself if that faltering Mr. Washington refused his duty. Citizen Genêt organized his legions as he went along, and threw tricolored cockades from the windows of his carriage. And at his glorious entry into Philadelphia (where I afterwards saw the great man with my own eyes), Mr. Washington and his Federal-Aristocrats trembled in their boots.

It was late in April, 1794, when I reached Pittsburg on my homeward journey and took passage down the Ohio with a certain Captain Wendell of the army, in a Kentucky boat. I had known the Captain in Louisville, for he had been stationed at Fort Finney, the army post across the Ohio from that town, and he had come to Pittsburg with a sergeant to fetch down the river some dozen recruits. This was a most fortunate circumstance for me, and in more ways than one. Although the Captain was a gruff and blunt man, grizzled and weather-beaten, a woman-hater, he could be a delightful companion when once his confidence was gained; and as we drifted in the mild spring weather through the long reaches between the passes he talked of Trenton and Brandywine and Yorktown. There was more than one bond of sympathy between us, for he worshipped Washington, detested the French party, and had a hatred for "filthy Democrats" second to none I have ever encountered.

We stopped for a few days at Fort Harmar, where the Muskingum pays its tribute to the Ohio, built by the Federal government to hold the territory which Clark had won. And leaving that hospitable place we took up our journey once more in the very miracle-time of the spring. The sunlight was like amber-crystal, the tall cottonwoods growing by the water-side flaunted a proud glory of green, the hills behind them that formed the first great swells of the sea of the wilderness were clothed in a thousand sheens and shaded by the purple budding of the oaks and walnuts on the northern slopes. On the yellow sandbars flocks of geese sat pluming in the sun, or rose at our approach to cast fleeting shadows on the water, their *honk-honks* echoing from the hills. Here and there a hawk swooped down from the azure to break the surface and bear off a wriggling fish that gleamed like silver, and at eventide we would see at the brink an elk or doe, with head poised, watching us as we drifted. We passed here and there a lonely cabin, to set my thoughts wandering backwards to my youth, and here and there in the dimples of the hills little clusters of white and brown houses, one day to become marts of the Republic.

My joy at coming back at this golden season to a country I loved was tempered by news I had heard from Captain Wendell, and which I had discussed with the officers at Fort Harmar. The Captain himself had broached the subject one cool evening, early in the journey, as we sat over the fire in our little cabin. He had been telling me about Brandywine, but suddenly he turned to me with a kind of fierce gesture that was natural to the man.

"Ritchie," he said, "you were in the Revolution yourself. You helped Clark to capture that country," and he waved his hand towards the northern shore; "why the devil don't you tell me about it?"

"You never asked me," I answered.

He looked at me curiously.

"Well," he said, "I ask you now."

I began lamely enough, but presently my remembrance of the young man who conquered all obstacles, who com-

pelled all men he met to follow and obey him, carried me strongly into the narrative. I remembered him, quiet, self-contained, resourceful, a natural leader, at twenty-five a bulwark for the sorely harried settlers of Kentucky; the man whose clear vision alone had perceived the value of the country north of the Ohio to the Republic, who had compelled the governor and council of Virginia to see it likewise. Who had guarded his secret from all men, who in the face of fierce opposition and intrigue had raised a little army to follow him — they knew not where. Who had surprised Kaskaskia, cowed the tribes of the North in his own person, and by sheer force of will drew after him and kept alive a motley crowd of men across the floods and through the ice to Vincennes.

We sat far into the night, the Captain listening as I had never seen a man listen. And when at length I had finished he was for a long time silent, and then he sprang to his feet with an oath that woke the sleeping soldiers forward and glared at me.

"My God!" he cried, "it is enough to make a man curse his uniform to think that such a man as Wilkinson wears it, while Clark is left to rot, to drink himself under the table from disappointment, to plot with the damned Jacobins — "

"To plot!" I cried, starting violently in my turn.

The Captain looked at me in astonishment.

"How long have you been away from Louisville?" he asked.

"It will be a year," I answered.

"Ah," said the Captain, "I will tell you. It is more than a year since Clark wrote Genêt, since the Ambassador bestowed on him a general's commission in the army of the French Republic."

"A general's commission!" I exclaimed. "And he is going to France?" The nation which had driven John Paul Jones from its service was now to lose George Rogers Clark!

"To France!" laughed the Captain. "No, this is become France enough. He is raising in Kentucky

and in the Cumberland country an army with a cursed, high-sounding name. Some of his old Illinois scouts — McChesney, whom you mentioned, for one — have been collecting bear's meat and venison hams all winter. They are going to march on Louisiana and conquer it for the French Republic, for Liberty, Equality — the Rights of Man, anything you like."

"On Louisiana!" I repeated; "what has the Federal government been doing?"

The Captain winked at me and sat down.

"The Federal government is supine, a laughing-stock — so our friends the Jacobins say, who have been shouting at Mr. Easton's tavern all winter. Nay, they declare that all this country west of the mountains, too, will be broken off and set up into a republic, and allied with that most glorious of all republics, France. Believe me, the Jacobins have not been idle, and there have been strange-looking birds of French plumage dodging between the General's house at Clarksville and the Bear Grass."

I was silent, the tears almost forcing themselves to my eyes at the pathetic sordidness of what I had heard.

"It can come to nothing," continued the Captain, in a changed voice. "General Clark's mind is unhinged by — disappointment. Mad Anthony [1] is not a man to be caught sleeping, and he has already attended to a little expedition from the Cumberland. Mad Anthony loves the General, as we all do, and the Federal government is wiser than the Jacobins think. It may not be necessary to do anything." Captain Wendell paused, and looked at me fixedly. "Ritchie, General Clark likes you, and you have never offended him. Why not go to his little house in Clarksville when you get to Louisville and talk to him plainly, as I know you can? Perhaps you might have some influence."

I shook my head sadly.

"I intend to go," I answered, "but I will have no influence."

[1] General Wayne of Revolutionary fame was then in command of that district.

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSE ABOVE THE FALLS

It was May-day, and shortly after dawn we slipped into the quiet water which is banked up for many miles above the Falls. The Captain and I sat forward on the deck, breathing deeply the sharp odor which comes from the wet forest in the early morning, listening to the soft splash of the oars, and watching the green form of Eighteen Mile Island as it gently drew nearer and nearer. And ere the sun had risen greatly we had passed Twelve Mile Island, and emerging from the narrow channel which divides Six Mile Island from the northern shore, we beheld, on its terrace above the Bear Grass, Louisville shining white in the morning sun. Majestic in its mile of width, calm, as though gathering courage, the river seemed to straighten for the ordeal to come, and the sound of its waters crying over the rocks far below came faintly to my ear and awoke memories of a day gone by. Fearful of the suck, we crept along the Indian shore until we counted the boats moored in the Bear Grass, and presently above the trees on our right we saw the Stars and Stripes floating from the log bastion of Fort Finney. And below the fort, on the gentle sunny slope to the river's brink, was spread the green garden of the garrison, with its sprouting vegetables and fruit trees blooming pink and white.

We were greeted by a company of buff and blue officers at the landing, and I was bidden to breakfast at their mess, Captain Wendell promising to take me over to Louisville afterwards. He had business in the town, and about eight of the clock we crossed the wide river in one of the barges of the fort and made fast at the landing in the Bear Grass. But no sooner had we entered the town

than we met a number of country people on horseback, with their wives and daughters — ay, and sweethearts — perched up behind them: the men mostly in butternut linsey hunting shirts and trousers, slouch hats, and red handkerchiefs stuck into their bosoms; the women marvellously pretty and fresh in stiff cotton gowns and Quaker hats, and some in crimped caps with ribbons neatly tied under the chin. Before Mr. Easton's tavern Joe Handy, the fiddler, was reeling off a few bars of "Hey, Betty Martin" to the familiar crowd of loungers under the big poplar.

"It's Davy Ritchie!" shouted Joe, breaking off in the middle of the tune; "welcome home, Davy. Ye're jest in time for the barbecue on the island."

"And Cap Wendell! Howdy, Cap!" drawled another, a huge, long-haired, sallow, dirty fellow. But the Captain only glared.

"Damn him!" he said, after I had spoken to Joe and we had passed on, "*he* ought to be barbecued; he nearly bit off Ensign Barry's nose a couple of months ago. Barry tried to stop the beast in a gouging fight."

The bright morning, the shady streets, the homelike frame and log houses, the old-time fragrant odor of corn-pone wafted out of the open doorways, the warm greetings, — all made me happy to be back again. Mr. Crede rushed out and escorted us into his cool store, and while he waited on his country customers bade his negro brew a bowl of toddy, at the mention of which Mr. Bill Whalen, chief habitué, roused himself from a stupor on a tobacco barrel. Presently the customers, having indulged in the toddy, departed for the barbecue, the Captain went to the fort, and Mr. Crede and myself were left alone to talk over the business which had sent me to Philadelphia.

At four o'clock, having finished my report and dined with my client, I set out for Clarksville, for Mr. Crede had told me, among other things, that the General was there. Louisville was deserted, the tavern porch vacant; but tacked on the logs beside the door was a printed bill which drew my curiosity. I stopped, caught by a familiar name in large type at the head of it.

"GEORGE R. CLARK, ESQUIRE,

"MAJOR-GENERAL IN THE ARMIES OF FRANCE AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY LEGION ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

"PROPOSALS

"For raising volunteers for the reduction of the Spanish posts on the Mississippi, for opening the trade of the said river and giving freedom to all its inhabitants —"

I had got so far when I heard a noise of footsteps within, and Mr. Easton himself came out, in his shirt-sleeves.

"By cricky, Davy," said he, "I'm right glad ter see ye ag'in. Readin' the General's bill, are ye? Tarnation, I reckon Washington and all his European fellers east of the mountains won't be able ter hold us back this time. I reckon we'll gallop over Louisiany in the face of all the Spaniards ever created. I've got some new whiskey I 'low will sink tallow. Come in, Davy."

As he took me by the arm, a laughter and shouting came from the back room.

"It's some of them Frenchy fellers come over from Knob Licks. They're in it," and he pointed his thumb over his shoulder to the proclamation, "and thar's one young American among 'em who's a t'arer. Come in."

I drank a glass of Mr. Easton's whiskey, and asked about the General.

"He stays over thar to Clarksville pretty much," said Mr. Easton. "Thar ain't quite so much walkin' araound ter do," he added significantly.

I made my way down to the water-side, where Jake Landrasse sat alone on the gunwale of a Kentucky boat, smoking a clay pipe as he fished. I had to exercise persuasion to induce Jake to paddle me across, which he finally agreed to do on the score of old friendship, and he declared that the only reason he was not at the barbecue was because he was waiting to take a few gentlemen to see General Clark. I agreed to pay the damages if he

were late in returning for these gentlemen, and soon he was shooting me with pulsing strokes across the lake-like expanse towards the landing at Fort Finney. Louisville and the fort were just above the head of the Falls, and the little town of Clarksville, which Clark had founded, at the foot of them. I landed, took the road that led parallel with the river through the tender green of the woods, and as I walked the mighty song which the Falls had sung for ages to the Wilderness rose higher and higher, and the faint spray seemed to be wafted through the forest and to hang in the air like the odor of a summer rain.

It was May-day. The sweet, caressing note of the thrush mingled with the music of the water, the dogwood and the wild plum were in festal array; but my heart was heavy with thinking of a great man who had cheapened himself. At length I came out upon a clearing where fifteen log houses marked the grant of the Federal government to Clark's regiment. Perched on a tree-dotted knoll above the last spasm of the waters in their two-mile race for peace, was a two-storied log house with a little, square porch in front of the door. As I rounded the corner of the house and came in sight of the porch I halted — by no will of my own — at the sight of a figure sunken in a wooden chair. It was that of my old Colonel. His hands were folded in front of him, his eyes were fixed but dimly on the forests of the Kentucky shore across the water; his hair, uncared for, fell on the shoulders of his faded blue coat, and the stained buff waistcoat was unbuttoned. For he still wore unconsciously the colors of the army of the American Republic.

"General!" I said.

He started, got to his feet, and stared at me.

"Oh, it's — it's Davy," he said. "I — I was expecting — some friends — Davy. What — what's the matter, Davy?"

"I have been away. I am glad to see you again, General."

"Citizen General, sir, Major-general in the army of the

French Republic and Commander-in-chief of the French Revolutionary Legion on the Mississippi."

"You will always be Colonel Clark to me, sir," I answered.

"You — you were the drummer boy, I remember, and strutted in front of the regiment as if you were the colonel. Egad, I remember how you fooled the Kaskaskians when you told them we were going away." He looked at me, but his eyes were still fixed on the point beyond. "You were always older than I, Davy. Are you married?"

In spite of myself, I laughed as I answered this question.

"You are as canny as ever," he said, putting his hand on my shoulder. "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, — they are only possible for the bachelor." Hearing a noise, he glanced nervously in the direction of the woods, only to perceive his negro carrying a pail of water. "I — I was expecting some friends," he said. "Sit down, Davy."

"I hope I am not intruding, General," I said, not daring to look at him.

"No, no, my son," he answered, "you are always welcome. Did we not campaign together? Did we not — shoot these very falls together on our way to Kaskaskia?" He had to raise his voice above the roar of the water. "Faith, well I remember the day. And you saved it, Davy, — you, a little gamecock, a little worldly-wise hop-o'-my-thumb, eh? Hamilton's scalp hanging by a lock, egad — and they frightened out of their five wits because it was growing dark." He laughed, and suddenly became solemn again. "There comes a time in every man's life when it grows dark, Davy, and then the cowards are afraid. They have no friends whose hands they can reach out and feel. But you are my friend. You remember that you said you would always be my friend? It — it was in the fort at Vincennes."

"I remember, General."

He rose from the steps, buttoned his waistcoat, and straightened himself with an effort. He looked at me impressively.

"You have been a good friend indeed, Davy, a faithful

friend," he said. "You came to me when I was sick, you lent me money," — he waved aside my protest. "I am happy to say that I shall soon be in a position to repay you, to reward you. My evil days are over, and I spurn that government which spurned me, for the honor and glory of which I founded that city," — he pointed in the direction of Louisville, — "for the power and wealth of which I conquered this Northwest territory. Listen! I am now in the service of a republic where the people have rights, I am Commander-in-chief of the French Revolutionary Legion on the Mississippi. Despite the supineness of Washington, the American nation will soon be at war with Spain. But my friends — and thank God they are many — will follow me — they will follow me to Natchez and New Orleans, — ay, even to Santa Fé and Mexico if I give the word. The West is with me, and for the West I shall win the freedom of the Mississippi. For France and Liberty I shall win back again Louisiana, and then I shall be a *Maréchal de Camp*."

I could not help thinking of a man who had not been wont to speak of his intentions, who had kept his counsel for a year before Kaskaskia.

"I need my drummer boy, Davy," he said, his face lighting up, "but he will not be a drummer boy now. He will be a trusted officer of high rank, mind you. Come," he cried, seizing me by the arm, "I will write the commission this instant. But hold! you read French, — I remember the day Father Gibault gave you your first lesson." He fumbled in his pocket, drew out a letter, and handed it to me. "This is from Citizen Michaux, the famous naturalist, the political agent of the French Republic. Read what he has written me."

I read, I fear in a faltering voice: —

"*Citoyen Général:*

"*Un homme qui a donné des preuves de son amour pour la Liberté et de sa haine pour le despotisme ne devait pas s'adresser en vain au ministre de la République française. Général, il est temps que les Américains libres de l'Ouest soient débarassés d'un ennemie aussi injuste que méprisable.*"

When I had finished I glanced at the General, but he seemed not to be heeding me. The sun was setting above the ragged line of forest, and a blue veil was spreading over the tumbling waters. He took me by the arm and led me into the house, into a bare room that was all awry. Maps hung on the wall, beside them the General's new commission, rudely framed. Among the littered papers on the table were two whiskey bottles and several glasses, and strewn about were a number of chairs, the arms of which had been whittled by the General's guests. Across the rough mantel-shelf was draped the French tricolor, and before the fireplace on the puncheons lay a huge bearskin which undoubtedly had not been shaken for a year. Picking up a bottle, the General poured out generous helpings in two of the glasses, and handed one to me.

"The mists are bad, Davy," said he; "I — I cannot afford to get the fever now. Let us drink success to the army of the glorious Republic, France."

"Let us drink first, General," I said, "to the old friendship between us."

"Good!" he cried. Tossing off his liquor, he set down the glass and began what seemed a fruitless search among the thousand papers on the table. But at length, with a grunt of satisfaction, he produced a form and held it under my eyes. At the top of the sheet was that much-abused and calumniated lady, the Goddess of Liberty.

"Now," he said, drawing up a chair and dipping his quill into an almost depleted ink-pot, "I have decided to make you, David Ritchie, with full confidence in your ability and loyalty to the rights of liberty and mankind, a captain in the Legion on the Mississippi."

I crossed the room swiftly, and as he put his pen to paper I laid my hand on his arm.

"General, I cannot," I said. I had seen from the first the futility of trying to dissuade him from the expedition, and I knew now that it would never come off. I was willing to make almost any sacrifice rather than offend him, but this I could not allow. The General drew himself up in his chair and stared at me with a flash of his old look.

"You cannot?" he repeated; "you have affairs to attend to, I take it."

I tried to speak, but he rode me down.

"There is money to be made in that prosperous town of Louisville." He did not understand the pain which his words caused me. He rose and laid his hands affectionately on my shoulders. "Ah, Davy, commerce makes a man timid. Do you forget the old days when I was the father and you the son? Come! I will make you a fortune undreamed of, and you shall be my fianancier once more."

"I had not thought of the money, General," I answered, "and I have always been ready to leave my business to serve a friend."

"There, there," said the General, soothingly, "I know it. I would not offend you. You shall have the commission, and you may come when it pleases you."

He sat down again to write, but I restrained him.

"I cannot go, General," I said.

"Thunder and fury," cried the General, "a man might think you were a weak-kneed Federalist." He stared at me, and stared again, and rose and recoiled a step. "My God," he said, "you cannot be a Federalist, you can't have marched to Kaskaskia and Vincennes, you can't have been a friend of mine and have seen how the government of the United States has treated me, and be a Federalist!"

It was an argument and an appeal which I had foreseen, yet which I knew not how to answer. Suddenly there came, unbidden, his own counsel which he had given me long ago, "Serve the people, as all true men should in a Republic, but do not rely upon their gratitude." This man had bidden me remember that.

"General," I said, trying to speak steadily, "it was you who gave me my first love for the Republic. I remember you as you stood on the heights above Kaskaskia waiting for the sun to go down, and you reminded me that it was the nation's birthday. And you said that our nation was to be a refuge of the oppressed of this earth, a nation made of all peoples, out of all time. And you said that the

lands beyond," and I pointed to the West as he had done, "should belong to it until the sun sets on the sea again."

I glanced at him, for he was silent, and in my life I can recall no sadder moment than this. The General heard, but the man who had spoken these words was gone forever. The eyes of this man before me were fixed, as it were, upon space. He heard, but he did not respond; for the spirit was gone. What I looked upon was the tortured body from which the genius — the spirit I had worshipped — had fled. I turned away, only to turn back in anger.

"What do you know of this France for which you are to fight?" I cried. "Have you heard of the thousands of innocents who are slaughtered, of the women and children who are butchered in the streets in the name of Liberty? What have those blood-stained adventurers to do with Liberty, what have the fish-wives who love the sight of blood to do with you that would fight for them? You warned me that this people and this government to which you have given so much would be ungrateful, — will the butchers and fish-wives be more grateful?"

He caught only the word *grateful*, and he rose to his feet with something of the old straightness and of the old power. And by evil chance his eye, and mine, fell upon a sword hanging on the farther wall. Well I remembered when he had received it, well I knew the inscription on its blade, "*Presented by the State of Virginia to her beloved son, George Rogers Clark, who by the conquest of Illinois and St. Vincennes extended her empire and aided in the defence of her liberties.*" By evil chance, I say, his eye lighted on that sword. In three steps he crossed the room to where it hung, snatched it from its scabbard, and ere I could prevent him he had snapped it across his knee and flung the pieces in a corner.

"So much for the gratitude of my country," he said.

* * * * * * *

I had gone out on the little porch and stood gazing over the expanse of forest and waters lighted by the afterglow. Then I felt a hand upon my shoulder, I heard a familiar voice calling me by an old name.

"Yes, General!" I turned wonderingly.

"You are a good lad, Davy. I trust you," he said. "I — I was expecting some friends."

He lifted a hand that was not too steady to his brow and scanned the road leading to the fort. Even as he spoke four figures emerged from the woods, — undoubtedly the gentlemen who had held the council at the inn that afternoon. We watched them in silence as they drew nearer, and then something in the walk and appearance of the foremost began to bother me. He wore a long, double-breasted, claret-colored redingote that fitted his slim figure to perfection, and his gait was the easy gait of a man who goes through the world careless of its pitfalls. So intently did I stare that I gave no thought to those who followed him. Suddenly, when he was within fifty paces, a cry escaped me, — I should have known that smiling, sallow, weakly handsome face anywhere in the world.

The gentleman was none other than Monsieur Auguste de St. Gré. At the foot of the steps he halted and swept his hand to his hat with a military salute.

"Citizen General," he said gracefully, "we come and pay our respec's to you and mek our réport, and ver' happy to see you look well. *Citoyens, Vive la République!* — Hail to the Citizen General!"

"*Vive la République! Vive le Général!*" cried the three citizens behind him.

"Citizens, you are very welcome," answered the General, gravely, as he descended the steps and took each of them by the hand. "Citizens, allow me to introduce to you my old friend, Citizen David Ritchie —"

"*Milles diables!*" cried the Citizen St. Gré, seizing me by the hand, "*c'est mon cher ami*, Monsieur Reetchie. Ver' happy you have this honor, Monsieur;" and snatching his wide-brimmed military cocked hat from his head he made me a smiling, sweeping bow.

"What!" cried the General to me, "you know the Sieur de St. Gré, Davy?"

"He is my guest once in Louisiane, *mon général*," Monsieur Auguste explained; "my family knows him."

"You know the Sieur de St. Gré, Davy?" said the General again.

"Yes, I know him," I answered, I fear with some brevity.

"Podden me," said Auguste, "I am now Citizen Captain de St. Gré. And you are also embark in the glorious cause — Ah, I am happy," he added, embracing me with a winning glance.

I was relieved from the embarrassment of denying the impeachment by reason of being introduced to the other notables, to Citizen Captain Sullivan, who wore an undress uniform consisting of a cotton butternut hunting shirt. He had charge on the Bear Grass of building the boats for the expedition, and was likewise a prominent member of that august body, the Jacobin Society of Lexington. Next came Citizen Quartermaster Depeau, now of Knob Licks, Kentucky, sometime of New Orleans. The Citizen Quartermaster wore his hair long in the backwoods fashion; he had a keen, pale face and sunken eyes.

"Ver' glad mek you known to me, Citizen Reetchie."

The fourth gentleman was likewise French, and called Gignoux. The Citizen Gignoux made some sort of an impression on me which I did not stop to analyze. He was a small man, with a little round hand that wriggled out of my grasp; he had a big French nose, bright eyes that popped a little and gave him the habit of looking sidewise, and grizzled, chestnut eyebrows over them. He had a thin-lipped mouth and a round chin.

"Citizen Reetchie, is it? I laik to know citizen's name glorified by gran' cause. Reetchie?"

"Will you enter, citizens?" said the General.

I do not know why I followed them unless it were to satisfy a devil-prompted curiosity as to how Auguste de St. Gré had got there. We went into the room, where the General's slovenly negro was already lighting the candles, and the General proceeded to collect and fill six of the glasses on the table. It was Citizen Captain Sullivan who gave the toast.

"Citizens," he cried, "I give you the health of the foremost apostle of Liberty in the Western world, the General

who tamed the savage tribes, who braved the elements, who brought to their knees the minions of a despot king." A slight suspicion of a hiccough filled this gap. "Cast aside by an ungrateful government, he is still unfaltering in his allegiance to the people. May he lead our Legion victorious through the Spanish dominions."

"*Vive la République!*" they shouted, draining their glasses. "*Vive le citoyen général Clark!*"

"Louisiana!" shouted Citizen Sullivan, warming, "Louisiana, groaning under oppression and tyranny, is imploring us with uplifted hands. To those remaining veteran patriots whose footsteps we followed to this distant desert, and who by their blood and toil have converted it into a smiling country, we now look. Under your guidance, Citizen General, we fought, we bled — "

How far the Citizen Captain would have gone is problematical. I had noticed a look of disgust slowly creeping into the Citizen Quartermaster's eyes, and at this juncture he seized the Citizen Captain and thrust him into a chair.

"*Sacré vent!*" he exclaimed, "it is the proclamation — he recites the proclamation! I see he have participate in those handbill. Poof, the world is to conquer, — let us not spik so much."

"I give you one toast," said the little Citizen Gignoux, slyly, "we all bring back one wife from *Nouvelle Orléans!*"

"Ha," exclaimed the Sieur de St. Gré, laughing, "the Citizen Captain Depeau — he has already one wife in *Nouvelle Orléans.*"[1]

The Citizen Quartermaster was angry at this, and it did not require any great perspicacity on my part to discover that he did not love the Citizen de St. Gré.

"He is call in his country, Gumbo de St. Gré," said Citizen Depeau. "It is a deesh in that country. But to beesness, citizens, — we embark on glorious enterprise.

[1] It is unnecessary for the editor to remind the reader that these are not Mr. Ritchie's words, but those of an adventurer. Mr. Depeau was an honest and worthy gentleman, earnest enough in a cause which was more to his credit than to an American's. According to contemporary evidence, Madame Depeau was in New Orleans.

The King and Queen of France, she pay for her treason with their haids, and we must be prepare' for do the sem."

"Ha," exclaimed the Sieur de St. Gré, "the Citizen Quartermaster will lose his provision before his haid."

The inference was plain, and the Citizen Quartermaster was quick to take it up.

"We are all among frien's," said he. "Why I call you Gumbo de St. Gré? When I come first settle in Louisiane you was wild man — yes. Drink tafia, fight duel, spend family money. Aristocrat then. No, I not hold my tongue. You go France and Monsieur le Marquis de St. Gré he get you in *gardes du corps* of the King. Yes, I tell him. You tell the Citizen General how come you Jacobin now, and we see if he mek you Captain."

A murmur of surprise escaped from several of the company, and they all stared at the Sieur de St. Gré. But General Clark brought down his fist on the table with something of his old-time vigor, and the glasses rattled.

"Gentlemen, I will have no quarrelling in my presence," he cried; "and I beg to inform Citizen Depeau that I bestow my commissions where it pleases me."

Auguste de St. Gré rose, flushing, to his feet. "Citizens," he said, with a fluency that was easy for him, "I never mek secret of my history — no. It is true my relation, Monsieur le Marquis de St. Gré, bought me a pair of colors in the King's *gardes du corps*."

"And is it not truth you tremple the coackade, what I hear from Philadelphe?" cried Depeau.

Monsieur Auguste smiled with a patient tolerance.

"If you hev pains to mek inquiry," said he, "you must learn that I join le Marquis de La Fayette and the National Guard. That I have since fight for the Revolution. That I am come now home to fight for Louisiane, as Monsieur Genêt will tell you whom I saw in Philadelphe."

"The Citizen *Capitaine* — he spiks true."

All eyes were turned towards Gignoux, who had been sitting back in his chair, very quiet.

"It is true what he say," he repeated, "I have it by Monsieur Genêt himself."

"Gentlemen," said General Clark, "this is beside the question, and I will not have these petty quarrels. I may as well say to you now that I have chosen the Citizen Captain to go at once to New Orleans and organize a regiment among the citizens there faithful to France. On account of his family and supposed Royalist tendencies he will not be suspected. I fear that a month at least has yet to elapse before our expedition can move."

"It is one wise choice," put in Monsieur Gignoux.

"*Monsieur le général* and gentlemen," said the Sieur de St. Gré, gracefully, "I thank you ver' much for the confidence. I leave by first flatboat and will have all things stir up when you come. The citizens of Louisiane await you. If necessair, we have hole in levee ready to cut."

"Citizens," interrupted General Clark, sitting down before the ink-pot, "let us hear the Quartermaster's report of the supplies at Knob Licks, and Citizen Sullivan's account of the boats. But hold," he cried, glancing around him, "where is Captain Temple? I heard that he had come to Louisville from the Cumberland to-day. Is he not going with you to New Orleans, St. Gré?"

I took up the name involuntarily.

"Captain Temple," I repeated, while they stared at me. "Nicholas Temple?"

It was Auguste de St. Gré who replied.

"The sem," he said. "I recall he was along with you in *Nouvelle Orléans*. He is at ze tavern, and he has had one gran' fight, and he is ver'—I am sorry—intoxicate—"

I know not how I made my way through the black woods to Fort Finney, where I discovered Jake Landrasse and his canoe. The road was long, and yet short, for my brain whirled with the expectation of seeing Nick again, and the thought of this poor, pathetic, ludicrous expedition compared to the sublime one I had known.

George Rogers Clark had come to this!

CHAPTER III

LOUISVILLE CELEBRATES

"THEY have gran' time in Louisville to-night, Davy," said Jake Landrasse, as he paddled me towards the Kentucky shore; "you hear?"

"I should be stone deaf if I didn't," I answered, for the shouting which came from the town filled me with forebodings.

"They come back from the barbecue full of whiskey," said Jake, "and a young man at the tavern come out on the porch and he say, 'Get ready you all to go to Louisiana! You been hole back long enough by tyranny.' Sam Barker come along and say he a Federalist. They done have a gran' fight, he and the young feller, and Sam got licked. He went at Sam just like a harricane."

"And then?" I demanded.

"Them four wanted to leave," said Jake, taking no trouble to disguise his disgust, "and I had to fetch 'em over. I've got to go back and wait for 'em now," and he swore with sincere disappointment. "I reckon there ain't been such a jamboree in town for years."

Jake had not exaggerated. Gentlemen from Moore's Settlement, from Sullivan's Station on the Bear Grass, — to be brief, the entire male population of the county seemed to have moved upon Louisville after the barbecue, and I paused involuntarily at the sight which met my eyes as I came into the street. A score of sputtering, smoking pine-knots threw a lurid light on as many hilarious groups, and revealed, fantastically enough, the boles and lower branches of the big shade trees above them. Navigation for the individual, difficult enough lower down,

in front of the tavern became positively dangerous. There was a human eddy, — nay, a maelstrom would better describe it. Fights began, but ended abortively by reason of the inability of the combatants to keep their feet; one man whose face I knew passed me with his hat afire, followed by several companions in gusts of laughter, for the torch-bearers were careless and burned the ears of their friends in their enthusiasm. Another person whom I recognized lacked a large portion of the front of his attire, and seemed sublimely unconscious of the fact. His face was badly scratched. Several other friends of mine were indulging in brief intervals of rest on the ground, and I barely avoided stepping on them. Still other gentlemen were delivering themselves of the first impressive periods of orations, only to be drowned by the cheers of their auditors. These were the snatches which I heard as I picked my way onward with exaggerated fear: —

"Gentlemen, the Mississippi is ours, let the tyrants who forbid its use beware!" "To hell with the Federal government!" "I tell you, sirs, this land is ours. We have conquered it with our blood, and I reckon no Spaniard is goin' to stop us. We ain't come this far to stand still. We settled Kaintuck, fit off the redskins, and we'll march across the Mississippi and on and on —" "To Louisiany!" they shouted, and the whole crowd would take it up, "To Louisiany! Open the river!"

So absorbed was I in my own safety and progress that I did not pause to think (as I have often thought since) of the full meaning of this, though I had marked it for many years. The support given to Wilkinson's plots, to Clark's expedition, was merely the outward and visible sign of the onward sweep of a resistless race. In spite of untold privations and hardships, of cruel warfare and massacre, these people had toiled over the mountains into this land, and impatient of check or hindrance would, even as Clark had predicted, when their numbers were sufficient leap the Mississippi. Night or day, drunk or sober, they spoke of this thing with an ever increasing vehemence, and no man of reflection who had read their history could

say that they would be thwarted. One day Louisiana would be theirs and their children's for the generations to come. One day Louisiana would be American.

That I was alive and unscratched when I got as far as the tavern is a marvel. Amongst all the passion-lit faces which surrounded me I could get no sight of Nick's, and I managed to make my way to a momentarily quiet corner of the porch. As I leaned against the wall there, trying to think what I should do, there came a great cheering from a little way up the street, and then I straightened in astonishment. Above the cheering came the sound of a drum beaten in marching time, and above that there burst upon the night what purported to be the "Marseillaise," taken up and bawled by a hundred drunken throats and without words. Those around me who were sufficiently nimble began to run towards the noise, and I ran after them. And there, marching down the middle of the street at the head of a ragged and most indecorous column of twos, in the centre of a circle of light cast by a pine-knot which Joe Handy held, was Mr. Nicholas Temple. His bearing, if a trifle unsteady, was proud, and — if I could believe my eyes — around his neck was slung the thing which I prized above all my possessions, — the drum which I had carried to Kaskaskia and Vincennes! He had taken it from the peg in my room.

I shrink from putting on paper the sentimental side of my nature, and indeed I could give no adequate idea of my affection for that drum. And then there was Nick, who had been lost to me for five years! My impulse was to charge the procession, seize Nick and the drum together, and drag them back to my room; but the futility and danger of such a course were apparent, and the caution for which I am noted prevented my undertaking it. The procession, augmented by all those to whom sufficient power of motion remained, cheered by the helpless but willing ones on the ground, swept on down the street and through the town. Even at this late day I shame to write it! Behold me, David Ritchie, Federalist, execrably sober, at the head of the column behind the leader. Was it

twenty minutes, or an hour, that we paraded? This I know, that we slighted no street in the little town of Louisville. What was my bearing, — whether proud or angry or carelessly indifferent, — I know not. The glare of Joe Handy's torch fell on my face, Joe Handy's arm and that of another gentleman, the worse for liquor, were linked in mine, and they saw fit to applaud at every step my conversion to the cause of Liberty. We passed time and time again the respectable door-yards of my Federalist friends, and I felt their eyes upon me with that look which the angels have for the fallen. Once, in front of Mr. Wharton's house, Mr. Handy burned my hair, apologized, staggered, and I took the torch! And I used it to good advantage in saving the drum from capture. For Mr. Temple, with all the will in the world, had begun to stagger. At length, after marching seemingly half the night, they halted by common consent before the house of a prominent Democrat who shall be nameless, and, after some minutes of vain importuning, Nick, with a tattoo on the drum, marched boldly up to the gate and into the yard. A desperate cunning came to my aid. I flung away the torch, leaving the head of the column in darkness, broke from Mr. Handy's embrace, and, seizing Nick by the arm, led him onward through the premises, he drumming with great docility. Followed by a few stragglers only (some of whom went down in contact with the trees of the orchard), we came to a gate at the back which I knew well, which led directly into the little yard that fronted my own rooms behind Mr. Crede's store. Pulling Nick through the gate, I slammed it, and he was only beginning to protest when I had him safe within my door, and the bolt slipped behind him. As I struck a light something fell to the floor with a crash, an odor of alcohol filled the air, and as the candle caught the flame I saw a shattered whiskey bottle at my feet and a room which had been given over to carousing. In spite of my feelings I could not but laugh at the perfectly irresistible figure my cousin made, as he stood before me with the drum slung in front of him. His hat was gone, his dust-covered clothes

awry, but he smiled at me benignly and without a trace of surprise.

"Sho you've come back at lasht, Davy," he said. "You're — you're very — irregular. You'll lose — law bishness. Y-you're worse'n Andy Jackson — he's always fightin'."

I relieved him, unprotesting, of the drum, thanking my stars there was so much as a stick left of it. He watched me with a silent and exaggerated interest as I laid it on the table. From a distance without came the shouts of the survivors making for the tavern.

"'Sfortunate you had the drum, Davy," he said gravely, "'rwe'd had no procession."

"It is fortunate I have it now," I answered, looking ruefully at the battered rim where Nick had missed the skin in his ardor.

"Davy," said he, "funny thing — I didn't know you wash a Jacobite. Sh'ou hear," he added relevantly, "th' Andy Jackson was married?"

"No," I answered, having no great interest in Mr. Jackson. "Where have you been seeing him again?"

"Nashville on Cumberland. Jackson'sh county sholicitor, — devil of a man. I'll tell you, Davy," he continued, laying an uncertain hand on my shoulder and speaking with great earnestness, "I had Chicashaw horse — Jackson'd Virginia thoroughbred — had a race — 'n'Jackson wanted to shoot me 'n'I wanted to shoot Jackson. 'N'then we all went to the Red Heifer — "

"What the deuce is the Red Heifer?" I asked.

"'N'dishtillery over a shpring, 'n'they blow a horn when the liquor runsh. 'N'then we had supper in Major Lewish's tavern. Major Lewis came in with roast pig on platter. You know roast pig, Davy? . . . 'N'Jackson pulls out's hunting knife n'waves it very mashestic. . . . You know how mashestic Jackson is when he — wantshtobe?" He let go my shoulder, brushed back his hair in a fiery manner, and, seizing a knife which unhappily lay on the table, gave me a graphic illustration of Mr. Jackson about to carve the pig, I retreating, and he coming on. "N'when he stuck the pig, Davy, — "

He poised the knife for an instant in the air, and then, before I could interpose, he brought it down deftly through the head of my precious drum, and such a frightful, agonized squeal filled the room that even I shivered involuntarily, and for an instant I had a vivid vision of a pig struggling in the hands of a butcher. I laughed in spite of myself. But Nick regarded me soberly.

"Funny thing, Davy," he said, "they all left the room." For a moment he appeared to be ruminating on this singular phenomenon. Then he continued: "'N'Jackson was back firsht, 'n'he was damned impolite . . . 'n'he shook his fist in my face" (here Nick illustrated Mr. Jackson's gesture), "'n'he said, 'Great God, sir, y'have a fine talent, but if y'ever do that again, I'll — I'll kill you.' . . . That'sh what he said, Davy."

"How long have you been in Nashville, Nick?" I asked.

"A year," he said, "lookin' after property I won rattle-an'-shnap — you remember?"

"And why didn't you let me know you were in Nashville?" I asked, though I realized the futility of the question.

"Thought you was — mad at me," he answered, "but you ain't, Davy. You've been very good-natured t' let me have your drum." He straightened. "I am ver' much obliged."

"And where were you before you went to Nashville?" I said.

"Charleston, 'Napolis . . . Philadelphia . . . everywhere," he answered.

"Now," said he, "'mgoin' t' bed."

I applauded this determination, but doubted whether he meant to carry it out. However, I conducted him to the back room, where he sat himself down on the edge of my four-poster, and after conversing a little longer on the subject of Mr. Jackson (who seemed to have gotten upon his brain), he toppled over and instantly fell asleep with his clothes on. For a while I stood over him, the old affection welling up so strongly within me

that my eyes were dimmed as I looked upon his face. Spare and handsome it was, and boyish still, the weaker lines emphasized in its relaxation. Would that relentless spirit with which he had been born make him, too, a wanderer forever? And was it not the strangest of fates which had impelled him to join this madcap expedition of this other man I loved, George Rogers Clark?

I went out, closed the door, and lighting another candle took from my portfolio a packet of letters. Two of them I had not read, having found them only on my return from Philadelphia that morning. They were all signed simply "Sarah Temple," they were dated at a certain number in the Rue Bourbon, New Orleans, and each was a tragedy in that which it had left unsaid. There was no suspicion of heroics, there was no railing at fate; the letters breathed but the one hope, — that her son might come again to that happiness of which she had robbed him. There were in all but twelve, and they were brief, for some affliction had nearly deprived the lady of the use of her right hand. I read them twice over, and then, despite the lateness of the hour, I sat staring at the candles, reflecting upon my own helplessness. I was startled from this revery by a knock. Rising hastily, I closed the door of my bedroom, thinking I had to do with some drunken reveller who might be noisy. The knock was repeated. I slipped back the bolt and peered out into the night.

"I saw dat light," said a voice which I recognized; "I think I come in to say good night."

I opened the door, and he walked in.

"You are one night owl, Monsieur Reetchie," he said.

"And you seem to prefer the small hours for your visits, Monsieur de St. Gré," I could not refrain from replying.

He swept the room with a glance, and I thought a shade of disappointment passed over his face. I wondered whether he were looking for Nick. He sat himself down in my chair, stretched out his legs, and regarded me with something less than his usual complacency.

"I have much laik for you, Monsieur Reetchie," he

began, and waved aside my bow of acknowledgment. "Before I go away from Louisville I want to spik with you, — this is a risson why I am here. You listen to what dat Depeau he say, — dat is not truth. My family knows you, I laik to have you hear de truth."

He paused, and while I wondered what revelations he was about to make, I could not repress my impatience at the preamble.

"You are my frien', you have prove it," he continued. "You remember las' time we meet?" (I smiled involuntarily.) "You was in bed, but you not need be ashame' for me. Two days after I went to France, and I not in New Orleans since."

"Two days after you saw me?" I repeated.

"Yaas, I run away. That was the mont' of August, 1789, and we have not then heard in New Orleans that the Bastille is attack. I lan' at La Havre, — it is the en' of Septembre. I go to the Château de St. Gré — great iron gates, long avenue of poplar, — big house all 'round a court, and Monsieur le Marquis is at Versailles. I borrow three louis from the *concierge*, and I go to Versailles to the hotel of Monsieur le Marquis. There is all dat trouble what you read about going on, and Monsieur le Marquis he not so glad to see me for dat risson. '*Mon cher Auguste*,' he cry, 'you want to be *officier* in *gardes du corps?* You are not afred?'" (Auguste stiffened.) "'I am a St. Gré, Monsieur le Marquis. I am afred of nothings,' I answered. He tek me to the King, I am made *lieutenant*, the mob come and the King and Queen are carry off to Paris. The King is prisoner, Monsieur le Marquis goes back to the Château de St. Gré. France is a republic. Monsieur — *que voulez-vous?*" (The Sieur de St. Gré shrugged his shoulders.) "I, too, become Republican. I become *officier* in the National Guard, — one must move with the time. Is it not so, Monsieur? I deman' of you if you ever expec' to see a St. Gré a Republican."

I expressed my astonishment.

"I give up my right, my principle, my family. I come

to America — I go to New Orleans where I have influence and I stir up revolution for France, for Liberty. Is it not noble cause?"

I had it on the tip of my tongue to ask Monsieur Auguste why he left France, but the uselessness of it was apparent.

"You see, Monsieur, I am justify before you, before my frien's, — that is all I care," and he gave another shrug in defiance of the world at large. "What I have done, I have done for principle. If I remain Royalist, I might have marry my cousin, Mademoiselle de St. Gré. Ha, Monsieur, you remember — the miniature you were so kin' as to borrow me four hundred livres?"

"I remember," I said.

"It is because I have much confidence in you, Monsieur," he said, "it is because I go — *peut-être* — to dangere, to death, that I come here and ask you to do me a favor."

"You honor me too much, Monsieur," I answered, though I could scarce refrain from smiling.

"It is because of your charactair," Monsieur Auguste was good enough to say. "You are to be repose' in, you are to be rely on. Sometime I think you ver' ole man. And this is why, and sence you laik objects of art, that I bring this and ask you keep it while I am in dangere."

I was mystified. He thrust his hand into his coat and drew forth an oval object wrapped in dirty paper, and then disclosed to my astonished eyes the miniature of Mademoiselle de St. Gré, — the miniature, I say, for the gold back and setting were lacking. Auguste had retained only the ivory, — whether from sentiment or necessity I will not venture. The sight of it gave me a strange sensation, and I can scarcely write of the anger and disgust which surged over me, of the longing to snatch it from his trembling fingers. Suddenly I forgot Auguste in the lady herself. There was something emblematical in the misfortune which had bereft the picture of its setting. Even so the Revolution had taken from her a brilliant life, a king and queen, home and friends. Yet the spirit

remained unquenchable, set above its mean surroundings, — ay, and untouched by them. I was filled with a painful curiosity to know what had become of her, which I repressed. Auguste's voice aroused me.

"Ah, Monsieur, is it not a face to love, to adore?"

"It is a face to obey," I answered, with some heat, and with more truth than I knew.

"*Mon Dieu*, Monsieur, it is so. It is that mek me love — you know not how. You know not what love is, Monsieur Reetchie, you never love laik me. You have not sem risson. Monsieur," he continued, leaning forward and putting his hand on my knee, "I think she love me — I am not sure. I should not be surprise'. But Monsieur le Marquis, her father, he trit me ver' bad. Monsieur le Marquis is guillotine' now, I mus' not spik evil of him, but he marry her to one ol' *garçon*, Le Vicomte d'Ivry-le-Tour."

"So Mademoiselle is married," I said after a pause.

"*Oui*, she is Madame la Vicomtesse now; I fall at her feet jus' the sem. I hear of her once at Bel Oeil, the château of Monsieur le Prince de Ligne in Flander'. After that they go I know not where. They are exile', — los' to me." He sighed, and held out the miniature to me. "Monsieur, I esk you favor. Will you be as kin' and keep it for me again?"

I have wondered many times since why I did not refuse. Suffice it to say that I took it. And Auguste's face lighted up.

"I am a thousan' times gret'ful," he cried; and added, as though with an afterthought, "Monsieur, would you be so kin' as to borrow me fif' dollars?"

CHAPTER IV

OF A SUDDEN RESOLUTION

It was nearly morning when I fell asleep in my chair, from sheer exhaustion, for the day before had been a hard one, even for me. I awoke with a start, and sat for some minutes trying to collect my scattered senses. The sun streamed in at my open door, the birds hopped on the lawn, and the various sounds of the bustling life of the little town came to me from beyond. Suddenly, with a glimmering of the mad events of the night, I stood up, walked uncertainly into the back room, and stared at the bed.

It was empty. I went back into the outer room; my eye wandered from the shattered whiskey bottle, which was still on the floor, to the table littered with Mrs. Temple's letters. And there, in the midst of them, lay a note addressed with my name in a big, unformed hand. I opened it mechanically.

"Dear Davy," — so it ran, — "I have gone away, I cannot tell you where. Some day I will come back and you will forgive me. God bless you! NICK."

He had gone away! To New Orleans? I had long ceased trying to account for Nick's actions, but the more I reflected, the more incredible it seemed to me that he should have gone there, of all places. And yet I had had it from Clark's own lips (indiscreet enough now!) that Nick and St. Gré were to prepare the way for an insurrection there. My thoughts ran on to other possibilities; would he see his mother? But he had no reason to know that Mrs. Temple was still in New Orleans. Then my glance fell on her letters, lying open on the table. Had he

read them? I put this down as improbable, for he was a man who held strictly to a point of honor.

And then there was Antoinette de St. Gré! I ceased to conjecture here, dashed some water in my eyes, pulled myself together, and, seizing my hat, hurried out into the street. I made a sufficiently indecorous figure as I ran towards the water-side, barely nodding to my acquaintances on the way. It was a fresh morning, a river breeze stirred the waters of the Bear Grass, and as I stood, scanning the line of boats there, I heard footsteps behind me. I turned to confront a little man with grizzled, chestnut eyebrows. He was none other than the Citizen Gignoux.

"You tek ze air, Monsieur Reetchie?" said he. "You look for some one, yes? You git up too late see him off."

I made a swift resolve never to quibble with this man.

"So Mr. Temple has gone to New Orleans with the Sieur de St. Gré," I said.

Citizen Gignoux laid a fat finger on one side of his great nose. The nose was red and shiny, I remember, and glistened in the sunlight.

"Ah," said he, "'tis no use tryin' hide from you. However, Monsieur Reetchie, you are the ver' soul of honor. And then your frien'! I know you not betray the Sieur de St. Gré. He is ver' fon' of you."

"Betray!" I exclaimed; "there is no question of betrayal. As far as I can see, your plans are carried on openly, with a fine contempt for the Federal government."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"'Tis not my doin'," he said, "but I am—what you call it?—a cipher. Sicrecy is what I believe. But drink too much, talk too much—is it not so, Monsieur? And if Monsieur le Baron de Carondelet, ze governor, hear they are in New Orleans, I think they go to Havana or Brazil." He smiled, but perhaps the expression of my face caused him to sober abruptly. "It is necessair for the cause. We must have good Revolution in Louisiane."

A suspicion of this man came over me, for a childlike simplicity characterized the other ringleaders in this expedition. Clark had had acumen once, and lost it; St. Gré

was a fool; Nick Temple was leading purposely a reckless life; the Citizens Sullivan and Depeau had, to say the least, a limited knowledge of affairs. All of these were responding more or less sincerely to the cry of the people of Kentucky (every day more passionate) that something be done about Louisiana. But Gignoux seemed of a different feather. Moreover, he had been too shrewd to deny what Colonel Clark would have denied in a soberer moment, — that St. Gré and Nick had gone to New Orleans.

"You not spik, Monsieur. You not think they have success. You are not Federalist, no, for I hear you march las' night with your frien', — I hear you wave torch."

"You make it your business to hear a great deal, Monsieur Gignoux," I retorted, my temper slipping a little.

He hastened to apologize.

"*Mille pardons*, Monsieur," he said; "I see you are Federalist — but drunk. Is it not so? Monsieur, you tink this ver' silly thing — this expedition."

"Whatever I think, Monsieur," I answered, "I am a friend of General Clark's."

"An enemy of ze cause?" he put in.

"Monsieur," I said, "if President Washington and General Wayne do not think it worth while to interfere with your plans, neither do I."

I left him abruptly, and went back to my long-delayed affairs with a heavy heart. The more I thought, the more criminally foolish Nick's journey seemed to me. However puerile the undertaking, De Lemos at Natchez and Carondelet at New Orleans had not the reputation of sleeping at their posts, and their hatred for Americans was well known. I sought General Clark, but he had gone to Knob Licks, and in my anxiety I lay awake at night, tossing in my bed.

One evening, perhaps four days after Nick's departure, I went into the common room of the tavern, and there I was surprised to see an old friend. His square, saffron face was just the same, his little jet eyes snapped as brightly as ever, his hair — which was swept high above his forehead and tied in an eelskin behind — was as black as when I had seen it at Kaskaskia. I had met Monsieur

Vigo many times since, for he was a familiar figure amongst the towns of the Ohio and the Mississippi, and from Vincennes to Anse à la Graisse, and even to New Orleans. His reputation as a financier was greater than ever. He was talking to my friend, Mr. Marshall, but he rose when he saw me, with a beaming smile.

"Ha, it is Davy," he cried, "but not the sem lil drummer boy who would not come into my store. Reech lawyer now, — I hear you make much money now, Davy."

"Congress money?" I said.

Monsieur Vigo threw out his hands, and laughed exactly as he had done in his log store at Kaskaskia.

"Congress have never repay me one sou," said Monsieur Vigo, making a face. "I have try — I have talk — I have represent — it is no good. Davy, it is your fault. You tell me tek dat money. You call dat finance?"

"David," said Mr. Marshall, sharply, "what the devil is this I hear of your carrying a torch in a Jacobin procession?"

"You may put it down to liquor, Mr. Marshall," I answered.

"Then you must have had a cask, egad," said Mr. Marshall, "for I never saw you drunk."

I laughed.

"I shall not attempt to explain it, sir," I answered.

"You must not allow your drum to drag you into bad company again," said he, and resumed his conversation. As I suspected, it was a vigorous condemnation of General Clark and his new expedition. I expressed my belief that the government did not regard it seriously, and would forbid the enterprise at the proper time.

"You are right, sir," said Mr. Marshall, bringing down his fist on the table. "I have private advices from Philadelphia that the President's consideration for Governor Shelby is worn out, and that he will issue a proclamation within the next few days warning all citizens at their peril from any connection with the pirates."

I laughed.

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Marshall," said I, "Citizen

Genêt has been liberal with nothing except commissions, and they have neither money nor men."

"The rascals have all left town," said Mr. Marshall. "Citizen Quartermaster Depeau, their local financier, has gone back to his store at Knob Licks. The Sieur de St. Gré and a Mr. Temple, as doubtless you know, have gone to New Orleans. And the most mysterious and therefore the most dangerous of the lot, Citizen Gignoux, has vanished like an evil spirit. It is commonly supposed that he, too, has gone down the river. You may see him, Vigo," said Mr. Marshall, turning to the trader; "he is a little man with a big nose and grizzled chestnut eyebrows."

"Ah, I know a lil 'bout him," said Monsieur Vigo; "he was on my boat two days ago, asking me questions."

"The devil he was!" said Mr. Marshall.

I had another disquieting night, and by the morning I had made up my mind. The sun was glinting on the placid waters of the river when I made my way down to the bank, to a great ten-oared keel boat that lay on the Bear Grass, with its square sail furled. An awning was stretched over the deck, and at a walnut table covered with papers sat Monsieur Vigo, smoking his morning pipe.

"Davy," said he, "you have come *à la bonne heure*. At ten I depart for New Orleans." He sighed. "It is so long voyage," he added, "and so lonely one. Sometime I have the good fortune to pick up a companion, but not to-day."

"Do you want me to go with you?" I said.

He looked at me incredulously.

"I should be delighted," he said, "but you mek a jest."

"I was never more serious in my life," I answered, "for I have business in New Orleans. I shall be ready."

"Ha," cried Monsieur Vigo, hospitably, "I shall be enchant. We will talk philosophe, Beaumarchais, Voltaire, Rousseau."

For Monsieur Vigo was a great reader, and we had often indulged in conversation which (we flattered ourselves) had a literary turn.

I spent the remaining hours arranging with a young lawyer of my acquaintance to look after my business, and at

ten o'clock I was aboard the keel boat with my small baggage. At eleven, Monsieur Vigo and I were talking "*philosophe*" over a wonderful breakfast under the awning, as we dropped down between the forest-lined shores of the Ohio. My host travelled in luxury, and we ate the Creole dishes, which his cook prepared, with silver forks which he kept in a great chest in the cabin.

You who read this may feel something of my impatience to get to New Orleans, and hence I shall not give a long account of the journey. What a contrast it was to that which Nick and I had taken five years before in Monsieur Gratiot's fur boat! Like all successful Creole traders, Monsieur Vigo had a wonderful knack of getting on with the Indians, and often when we tied up of a night the chief men of a tribe would come down to greet him. We slipped southward on the great, yellow river which parted the wilderness, with its sucks and eddies and green islands, every one of which Monsieur knew, and I saw again the flocks of water-fowl and herons in procession, and hawks and vultures wheeling in their search. Sometimes a favorable wind sprang up, and we hoisted the sail. We passed the Walnut Hills, the *Nogales*, the moans of the alligators broke our sleep by night, and at length we came to Natchez, ruled over now by that watch-dog of the Spanish King, Gayoso de Lemos. Thanks to Monsieur Vigo, his manners were charming and his hospitality gracious, and there was no trouble whatever about my passport.

Our progress was slow when we came at last to the belvedered plantation houses amongst the orange groves; and as we sat on the wide galleries in the summer nights, we heard all the latest gossip of the capital of Louisiana. The river was low; there was an ominous quality in the heat which had its effect, indeed, upon me, and made the old Creoles shake their heads and mutter a word with a terrible meaning. New Orleans was a cesspool, said the enlightened. The Baron de Carondelet, indefatigable man, aimed at digging a canal to relieve the city of its filth, but this would be the year when it was most needed, and it was not dug. Yes, Monsieur le Baron was energy

itself. That other fever — the political one — he had scotched. "Ça Ira" and "La Marseillaise" had been sung in the theatres, but not often, for the Baron had sent the alcaldes to shut them up. Certain gentlemen of French ancestry had gone to languish in the Morro at Havana. Yes, Monsieur de Carondelet, though fat, was on horseback before dawn, New Orleans was fortified as it never had been before, the militia organized, real cannon were on the ramparts which could shoot at a pinch.

Sub rosa, I found much sympathy among the planters with the Rights of Man. What had become, they asked, of the expedition of Citizen General Clark preparing in the North? They may have sighed secretly when I painted it in its true colors, but they loved peace, these planters. Strangly enough, the name of Auguste de St. Gré never crossed their lips, and I got no trace of him or Nick at any of these places. Was it possible that they might not have come to New Orleans after all?

Through the days, when the sun beat upon the awning with a tropical fierceness, when Monsieur Vigo abandoned himself to his siestas, I thought. It was perhaps characteristic of me that I waited nearly three weeks to confide in my old friend the purpose of my journey to New Orleans. It was not because I could not trust him that I held my tongue, but because I sought some way of separating the more intimate story of Nick's mother and his affair with Antoinette de St. Gré from the rest of the story. But Monsieur Vigo was a man of importance in Louisiana, and I reflected that a time might come when I should need his help. One evening, when we were tied up under the oaks of a bayou, I told him. There emanated from Monsieur Vigo a sympathy which few men possess, and this I felt strongly as he listened, breaking his silence only at long intervals to ask a question. It was a still night, I remember, of great beauty, with a wisp of a moon hanging over the forest line, the air heavy with odors and vibrant with a thousand insect tones.

"And what you do, Davy?" he said at length.

"I must find my cousin and St. Gré before they have a

chance to get into much mischief," I answered. "If they have already made a noise, I thought of going to the Baron de Carondelet and telling him what I know of the expedition. He will understand what St. Gré is, and I will explain that Mr. Temple's reckless love of adventure is at the bottom of his share in the matter."

"*Bon*, Davy," said my host, "if you go, I go with you But I believe ze Baron think Morro good place for them jus' the sem. Ze Baron has been make *misérable* with Jacobins. But I go with you if you go."

He discoursed for some time upon the quality of the St. Grés, their public services, and before he went to sleep he made the very just remark that there was a flaw in every string of beads. As for me, I went down into the cabin, surreptitiously lighted a candle, and drew from my pocket that piece of ivory which had so strangely come into my possession once more. The face upon it had haunted me since I had first beheld it. The miniature was wrapped now in a silk handkerchief which Polly Ann had bought for me in Lexington. Shall I confess it? — I had carefully rubbed off the discolorations on the ivory at the back, and the picture lacked now only the gold setting. As for the face, I had a kind of consolation from it. I seemed to draw of its strength when I was tired, of its courage when I faltered. And, during those four days of indecision in Louisville, it seemed to say to me in words that I could not evade or forget, "Go to New Orleans." It was a sentiment — foolish, if you please — which I could not resist. Nay, which I did not try to resist, for I had little enough of it in my life. What did it matter? I should never see Madame la Vicomtesse d'Ivry-le-Tour.

She was Hélène to me; and the artist had caught the strength of her soul in her clear-cut face, in the eyes that flashed with wit and courage, — eyes that seemed to look with scorn upon what was mean in the world and untrue, with pity on the weak. Here was one who might have governed a province and still have been a woman, one who had taken into exile the best of safeguards against misfortune, — humor and an indomitable spirit.

CHAPTER V

THE HOUSE OF THE HONEYCOMBED TILES

As long as I live I shall never forget that Sunday morning of my second arrival at New Orleans. A saffron heat-haze hung over the river and the city, robbed alike from the yellow waters of the one and the pestilent moisture of the other. It would have been strange indeed if this capital of Louisiana, brought hither to a swamp from the sands of Biloxi many years ago by the energetic Bienville, were not visited from time to time by the scourge!

Again I saw the green villas on the outskirts, the verdure-dotted expanse of roofs of the city behind the levee bank, the line of Kentucky boats, keel boats and barges which brought our own resistless commerce hither in the teeth of royal mandates. Farther out, and tugging fretfully in the yellow current, were the aliens of the blue seas, high-hulled, their tracery of masts and spars shimmering in the heat: a full-rigged ocean packet from Spain, a barque and brigantine from the West Indies, a rakish slaver from Africa with her water-line dry, discharged but yesterday of a teeming horror of freight. I looked again upon the familiar rows of trees which shaded the gravelled promenades where Nick had first seen Antoinette. Then we were under it, for the river was low, and the dingy-uniformed officer was bowing over our passports beneath the awning. We walked ashore, Monsieur Vigo and I, and we joined a staring group of keel boatmen and rivermen under the willows.

Below us, the white shell walks of the Place d'Armes were thronged with gayly dressed people. Over their heads rose the fine new Cathedral, built by the munificence of Don Andreas Almonaster, and beside that the many-

windowed, heavy-arched Cabildo, nearly finished, which will stand for all time a monument to Spanish builders.

"It is Corpus Christi day," said Monsieur Vigo; "let us go and see the procession."

Here once more were the bright-turbaned negresses, the gay Creole gowns and scarfs, the linen-jacketed, broad-hatted merchants, with those of soberer and more conventional dress, laughing and chatting, the children playing despite the heat. Many of these people greeted Monsieur Vigo. There were the saturnine, long-cloaked Spaniards, too, and a greater number than I had believed of my own keen-faced countrymen lounging about, mildly amused by the scene. We crossed the square, and with the courtesy of their race the people made way for us in the press; and we were no sooner placed ere the procession came out of the church. Flaming soldiers of the Governor's guard, two by two; sober, sandalled friars in brown, priests in their robes, — another batch of color; crosses shimmering, tapers emerging from the cool darkness within to pale by the light of day. Then down on their knees to Him who sits high above the yellow haze fell the thousands in the Place d'Armes. For here was the Host itself, flower-decked in white and crimson, its gold-tasselled canopy upheld by four tonsured priests, a sheen of purple under it, — the Bishop of Louisiana in his robes.

"The Governor!" whispered Monsieur Vigo, and the word was passed from mouth to mouth as the people rose from their knees. François Louis Hector, Baron de Carondelet, resplendent in his uniform of colonel in the royal army of Spain, his orders glittering on his breast, — pillar of royalty and enemy to the Rights of Man! His eye was stern, his carriage erect, but I seemed to read in his careworn face the trials of three years in this moist capital. After the Governor, one by one, the waiting Associations fell in line, each with its own distinguishing sash. So the procession moved off into the narrow streets of the city, the people in the Place dispersed to new vantage points, and Monsieur Vigo signed me to follow him.

"I have a frien', *la veuve* Gravois, who lives ver' quiet. She have one room, and I ask her tek you in, Davy." He led the way through the empty Rue Chartres, turned to the right at the Rue Bienville, and stopped before an unpretentious house some three doors from the corner. Madame Gravois, elderly, wizened, primp in a starched cotton gown, opened the door herself, fell upon Monsieur Vigo in the Creole fashion; and within a quarter of an hour I was installed in her best room, which gave out on a little court behind. Monsieur Vigo promised to send his servant with my baggage, told me his address, bade me call on him for what I wanted, and took his leave.

First, there was Madame Gravois' story to listen to as she bustled about giving orders to a kinky-haired negro girl concerning my dinner. Then came the dinner, excellent — if I could have eaten it. The virtues of the former Monsieur Gravois were legion. He had come to Louisiana from Toulon, planted indigo, fought a duel, and Madame was a widow. So I condense two hours into two lines. Happily, Madame was not proof against the habits of the climate, and she retired for her siesta. I sought my room, almost suffocated by a heat which defies my pen to describe, a heat reeking with moisture sucked from the foul kennels of the city. I had felt nothing like it in my former visit to New Orleans. It seemed to bear down upon my brain, to clog the power of thought, to make me vacillating. Hitherto my reasoning had led me to seek Monsieur de St. Gré, to count upon that gentleman's common sense and his former friendship. But now that the time had come for it, I shrank from such a meeting. I remembered his passionate affection for Antoinette, I imagined that he would not listen calmly to one who was in some sort connected with her unhappiness. So a kind of cowardice drove me first to Mrs. Temple. She might know much that would save me useless trouble and blundering.

The shadows of tree-top, thatch, and wall were lengthening as I walked along the Rue Bourbon. Heedless of what the morrow might bring forth, the street was given

over to festivity. Merry groups were gathered on the corners, songs and laughter mingled in the court-yards, billiard balls clicked in the *cabarets*. A fat, jolly little Frenchman, surrounded by tripping children, sat in his doorway on the edge of the *banquette*, fiddling with all his might, pausing only to wipe the beads of perspiration from his face.

"Madame Clive, *mais oui, Monsieur, l' petite maison en face.*" Smiling benignly at the children, he began to fiddle once more.

The little house opposite! Mrs. Temple, mistress of Temple Bow, had come to this! It was a strange little home indeed, Spanish, one-story, its dormers hidden by a honeycombed screen of terra-cotta tiles. This screen was set on the extreme edge of the roof which overhung the *banquette* and shaded the yellow adobe wall of the house. Low, unpretentious, the latticed shutters of its two windows giving it but a scant air of privacy, — indeed, they were scarred by the raps of careless passers-by on the sidewalk. The two little battened doors, one step up, were closed. I rapped, waited, and rapped again. The musician across the street stopped his fiddling, glanced at me, smiled knowingly at the children; and they paused in their dance to stare. Then one of the doors was pushed open a scant four inches, a scarlet madras handkerchief appeared in the crack above a yellow face. There was a long moment of silence, during which I felt the scrutiny of a pair of sharp, black eyes.

"What yo' want, Marse?"

The woman's voice astonished me, for she spoke the dialect of the American tide-water.

"I should like to see Mrs. Clive," I answered.

The door closed a shade.

"Mistis sick, she ain't see nobody," said the woman. She closed the door a little more, and I felt tempted to put my foot in the crack.

"Tell her that Mr. David Ritchie is here," I said.

There was an instant's silence, then an exclamation.

"Lan' sakes, is you Marse Dave?" She opened the

door — furtively, I thought — just wide enough for me to pass through. I found myself in a low-ceiled, darkened room, opposite a trim negress who stood with her arms akimbo and stared at me.

"Marse Dave, you doan rec'lect me. I'se Lindy, I'se Breed's daughter. I rec'lect you when you was at Temple Bow. Marse Dave, how you'se done growed! Yassir, when I heerd from Miss Sally I done comed here to tek cyar ob her."

"How is your mistress?" I asked.

"She po'ly, Marse Dave," said Lindy, and paused for adequate words. I took note of this darky who, faithful to a family, had come hither to share her mistress's exile and obscurity. Lindy was spare, energetic, forceful — and, I imagined, a discreet guardian indeed for the unfortunate. "She po'ly, Marse Dave, an' she ain' nebber leabe dis year house. Marse Dave," said Lindy earnestly, lowering her voice and taking a step closer to me, "I done reckon de Mistis gwine ter die ob lonesomeness. She des sit dar an' brood, an' brood — an' she use' ter de bes' company, to de quality. No, sirree, Marse Dave, she ain' nebber sesso, but she tink 'bout de young Marsa night an' day. Marse Dave?"

"Yes?" I said.

"Marse Dave, she have a lil pink frock dat Marsa Nick had when he was a bebby. I done cotch Mistis lookin' at it, an' she hid it when she see me an' blush like 'twas a sin. Marse Dave?"

"Yes?" I said again.

"Where am de young Marsa?"

"I don't know, Lindy," I answered.

Lindy sighed.

"She done talk 'bout you, Marse Dave, an' how good you is — "

"And Mrs. Temple sees no one," I asked.

"Dar's one lady come hyar ebery week, er French lady, but she speak English jes' like the Mistis. Dat's my fault," said Lindy, showing a line of white teeth.

"Your fault," I exclaimed.

"Yassir. When I comed here from Caroliny de Mistis done tole me not ter let er soul in hyah. One day erbout three mont's ergo, dis yer lady come en she des wheedled me ter let her in. She was de quality, Marse Dave, and I was des' afeard not ter. I declar' I hatter. Hush," said Lindy, putting her fingers to her lips, "dar's de Mistis!"

The door into the back room opened, and Mrs. Temple stood on the threshold, staring with uncertain eyes into the semi-darkness.

"Lindy," she said, "what have you done?"

"Miss Sally —" Lindy began, and looked at me. But I could not speak for looking at the lady in the doorway.

"Who is it?" she said again, and her hand sought the door-post tremblingly. "Who is it?"

Then I went to her. At my first step she gave a little cry and swayed, and had I not taken her in my arms I believe she would have fallen.

"David!" she said, "David, is it you? I — I cannot see very well. Why did you not speak?" She looked at Lindy and smiled. "It is because I am an old woman, Lindy," and she lifted her hand to her forehead. "See, my hair is white — I shock you, David."

Leaning on my shoulder, she led me through a little bedroom in the rear into a tiny garden court beyond, a court teeming with lavish colors and redolent with the scent of flowers. A white shell walk divided the garden and ended at the door of a low outbuilding, from the chimney of which blue smoke curled upward in the evening air. Mrs. Temple drew me almost fiercely towards a bench against the adobe wall.

"Where is he?" she said. "Where is he, David?"

The suddenness of the question staggered me; I hesitated.

"I do not know," I answered.

I could not look into her face and say it. The years of torment and suffering were written there in characters not to be mistaken. Sarah Temple, the beauty, was dead indeed. The hope which threatened to light again the dead fires in the woman's eyes frightened me.

"Ah," she said sharply, "you are deceiving me. It is not like you, David. You are deceiving me. Tell me, tell me, for the love of God, who has brought me to bear chastisement." And she gripped my arm with a strength I had not thought in her.

"Listen," I said, trying to calm myself as well as her. "Listen, Mrs. Temple." I could not bring myself to call her otherwise.

"You are keeping him away from me," she cried. "Why are you keeping him away? Have I not suffered enough? David, I cannot live long. I do not dare to die — until he has forgiven me."

I forced her, gently as I might, to sit on the bench, and I seated myself beside her.

"Listen," I said, with a sternness that hid my feelings, and perforce her expression changed again to a sad yearning, "you must hear me. And you must trust me, for I have never pretended. You shall see him if it is in my power."

She looked at me so piteously that I was near to being unmanned.

"I will trust you," she whispered.

"I have seen him," I said. She started violently, but I laid my hand on hers, and by some self-mastery that was still in her she was silent. "I saw him in Louisville a month ago, when I returned from a year's visit to Philadelphia." I could not equivocate with this woman, I could no more lie to her sorrow than to the Judgment. Why had I not foreseen her question?

"And he hates me?" She spoke with a calmness now that frightened me more than her agitation had done.

"I do not know," I answered; "when I would have spoken to him he was gone."

"He was drunk," she said. I stared at her in frightened wonderment. "He was drunk — it is better than if he had cursed me. He did not mention me? Or any one?"

"He did not," I answered.

She turned her face away.

"Go on, I will listen to you," she said, and sat immov-

able through the whole of my story, though her hand trembled in mine. And while I live I hope never to have such a thing to go through with again. Truth held me to the full, ludicrous tragedy of the tale, to the cheap character of my old Colonel's undertaking, to the incident of the drum, to the conversation in my room. Likewise, truth forbade me to rekindle her hope. I did not tell her that Nick had come with St. Gré to New Orleans, for of this my own knowledge was as yet not positive. For a long time after I had finished she was silent.

"And you think the expedition will not get here?" she asked finally, in a dead voice.

"I am positive of it," I answered, "and for the sake of those who are engaged in it, it is mercifully best that it should not. The day may come," I added, for the sake of leading her away, "when Kentucky will be strong enough to overrun Louisiana. But not now."

She turned to me with a trace of her former fierceness.

"Why are you in New Orleans?" she demanded.

A sudden resolution came to me then.

"To bring you back with me to Kentucky," I answered. She shook her head sadly, but I continued: "I have more to say. I am convinced that neither Nick nor you will be happy until you are mother and son again. You have both been wanderers long enough."

Once more she turned away and fell into a revery. Over the housetop, from across the street, came the gay music of the fiddler. Mrs. Temple laid her hand gently on my shoulder.

"My dear," she said, smiling, "I could not live for the journey."

"You must live for it," I answered. "You have the will. You must live for it, for his sake."

She shook her head, and smiled at me with a courage which was the crown of her sufferings.

"You are talking nonsense, David," she said; "it is not like you. Come," she said, rising with something of her old manner, "I must show you what I have been doing all these years. You must admire my garden."

I followed her, marvelling, along the shell path, and there came unbidden to my mind the garden at Temple Bow, where she had once been wont to sit, tormenting Mr. Mason or bending to the tale of Harry Riddle's love. Little she cared for flowers in those days, and now they had become her life. With such thoughts in my mind, I listened unheeding to her talk. The place was formerly occupied by a shiftless fellow, a tailor ; and the court, now a paradise, had been a rubbish heap. That orange tree which shaded the uneven doorway of the kitchen she had found here. Figs, pomegranates, magnolias ; the camellias dazzling in their purity ; the blood-red oleanders ; the pink roses that hid the crumbling adobe and climbed even to the sloping tiles, — all these had been set out and cared for with her own hands. Ay, and the fragrant bed of yellow jasmine over which she lingered, — Antoinette's favorite flower.

Antoinette's flowers that she wore in her hair ! In her letters Mrs. Temple had never mentioned Antoinette, and now she read the question (perchance purposely put there) in my eyes. Her voice faltered sadly. Scarce a week had she been in the house before Antoinette had found her.

" I — I sent the girl away, David. She came without Monsieur de St. Gré's knowledge, without his consent. It is natural that he thinks me — I will not say what. I sent Antoinette away. She clung to me, she would not go, and I had to be — cruel. It is one of the things which make the nights long — so long. My sins have made her life unhappy."

" And you hear of her? She is not married ? " I asked.

" No, she is not married," said Mrs. Temple, stooping over the jasmines. Then she straightened and faced me, her voice shaken with earnestness. " David, do you think that Nick still loves her ? "

Alas, I could not answer that. She bent over the jasmines again.

" There were five years that I knew nothing," she continued. " I did not dare ask Mr. Clark, who comes to me

on business, as you know. It was Mr. Clark who brought back Lindy on one of his trips to Charleston. And then, one day in March of this year, Madame de Montméry came."

"Madame de Montméry?" I repeated.

"It is a strange story," said Mrs. Temple. "Lindy had never admitted any one, save Mr. Clark. One day early in the spring, when I was trimming my roses by the wall there, the girl ran to me and said that a lady wished to see me. Why had she let her in? Lindy did not know, she could not refuse her. Had the lady demanded admittance? Lindy thought that I would like to see her. David, it was a providential weakness, or curiosity, that prompted me to go into the front room, and then I saw why Lindy had opened the door to her. Who she is or what she is I do not know to this day. Who am I now that I should inquire? I know that she is a lady, that she has exquisite manners, that I feel now that I cannot live without her. She comes every week, sometimes twice, she brings me little delicacies, new seeds for my garden. But, best of all, she brings me herself, and I am always counting the days until she comes again. Yes, and I always fear that she, too, will be taken away from me."

I had not heard the sound of voices, but Mrs. Temple turned, startled, and looked towards the house. I followed her glance, and suddenly I knew that my heart was beating.

"A LADY STOOD IN THE VINE-COVERED DOORWAY."

CHAPTER VI

MADAME LA VICOMTESSE

HESITATING on the step, a lady stood in the vine-covered doorway, a study in black and white in a frame of pink roses. The sash at her waist, the lace mantilla that clung about her throat, the deftly coiled hair with its sheen of the night waters — these in black. The simple gown — a tribute to the art of her countrywomen — in white.

Mrs. Temple had gone forward to meet her, but I stood staring, marvelling, forgetful, in the path. They were talking, they were coming towards me, and I heard Mrs. Temple pronounce my name and hers — Madame de Montméry. I bowed, she courtesied. There was a baffling light in the lady's brown eyes when I dared to glance at them, and a smile playing around her mouth. Was there no word in the two languages to find its way to my lips? Mrs. Temple laid her hand on my arm.

"David is not what one might call a ladies' man, Madame," she said.

The lady laughed.

"Isn't he?" she said.

"I am sure you will frighten him with your wit," answered Mrs. Temple, smiling. "He is worth sparing."

"He is worth frightening, then," said the lady, in exquisite English, and she looked at me again.

"You and David should like each other," said Mrs. Temple; "you are both capable persons, friends of the friendless and towers of strength to the weak."

The lady's face became serious, but still there was the expression I could not make out. In an instant she seemed to have scrutinized me with a precision from which there could be no appeal.

"I seem to know Mr. Ritchie," she said, and added quickly : "Mrs. Clive has talked a great deal about you. She has made you out a very wonderful person."

"My dear," said Mrs. Temple, "the wonderful people of this world are those who find time to comfort and help the unfortunate. That is why you and David are wonderful. No one knows better than I how easy it is to be selfish."

"I have brought you an English novel," said Madame de Montoméry, turning abruptly to Mrs. Temple. "But you must not read it at night. Lindy is not to let you have it until to-morrow."

"There," said Mrs. Temple, gayly, to me, "Madame is not happy unless she is controlling some one, and I am a rebellious subject."

"You have not been taking care of yourself," said Madame. She glanced at me, and bit her lips, as though guessing the emotion which my visit had caused. "Listen," she said, "the vesper bells ! You must go into the house, and Mr. Ritchie and I must leave you."

She took Mrs. Temple by the arm and led her, unresisting, along the path. I followed, a thousand thoughts and conjectures spinning in my brain. They reached the bench under the little tree beside the door, and stood talking for a moment of the routine of Mrs. Temple's life. Madame, it seemed, had prescribed a regimen, and meant to have it followed. Suddenly I saw Mrs. Temple take the lady's arm, and sink down upon the bench. Then we were both beside her, bending over her, she sitting upright and smiling at us.

"It is nothing," she said ; "I am so easily tired."

Her lips were ashen, and her breath came quickly. Madame acted with that instant promptness which I expected of her.

"You must carry her in, Mr. Ritchie," she said quietly.

"No, it is only momentary, David," said Mrs. Temple. I remember how pitifully frail and light she was as I picked her up and followed Madame through the doorway into the little bedroom. I laid Mrs. Temple on the bed.

"Send Lindy here," said Madame.

Lindy was in the front room with the negress whom Madame had brought with her. They were not talking. I supposed then this was because Lindy did not speak French. I did not know that Madame de Montméry's maid was a mute. Both of them went into the bedroom, and I was left alone. The door and windows were closed, and a green myrtle-berry candle was burning on the table. I looked about me with astonishment. But for the low ceiling and the wide cypress puncheons of the floor the room might have been a boudoir in a manor-house. On the slender-legged, polished mahogany table lay books in tasteful bindings; a diamond-paned bookcase stood in the corner; a *fauteuil* and various other chairs which might have come from the hands of an Adam were ranged about. Tall silver candlesticks graced each end of the little mantel-shelf, and between them were two Lowestoft vases having the Temple coat of arms.

It might have been half an hour that I waited, now pacing the floor, now throwing myself into the arm-chair by the fireplace. Anxiety for Mrs. Temple, problems that lost themselves in a dozen conjectures, all idle — these agitated me almost beyond my power of self-control. Once I felt for the miniature, took it out, and put it back without looking at it. At last I was startled to my feet by the opening of the door, and Madame de Montméry came in. She closed the door softly behind her, with the deft quickness and decision of movement which a sixth sense had told me she possessed, crossed the room swiftly, and stood confronting me.

"She is easy again, now," she said simply. "It is one of her attacks. I wish you might have seen me before you told her what you had to say to her."

"I wish indeed that I had known you were here."

She ignored this, whether intentionally, I know not.

"It is her heart, poor lady! I am afraid she cannot live long." She seated herself in one of the straight chairs. "Sit down, Mr. Ritchie," she said; "I am glad you waited. I wanted to talk with you."

"I thought that you might, Madame la Vicomtesse," I answered.

She made no gesture, either of surprise or displeasure.

"So you knew," she said quietly.

"I knew you the moment you appeared in the doorway," I replied. It was not just what I meant to say.

There flashed over her face that expression of the miniature, the mouth repressing the laughter in the brown eyes.

"Montméry is one of my husband's places," she said. "When Antoinette asked me to come here and watch over Mrs. Temple, I chose the name."

"And Mrs. Temple has never suspected you?"

"I think not. She thinks I came at Mr. Clark's request. And being a lady, she does not ask questions. She accepts me for what I appear to be."

It seemed so strange to me to be talking here in New Orleans, in this little Spanish house, with a French vicomtesse brought up near the court of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette; nay, with Hélène de St. Gré, whose portrait had twice come into my life by a kind of strange fatality (and was at that moment in my pocket), that I could scarce maintain my self-possession in her presence. I had given the portrait, too, attributes and a character, and I found myself watching the lady with a breathless interest lest she should fail in any of these. In the intimacy of the little room I felt as if I had known her always, and again, that she was as distant from me and my life as the court from which she had come. I found myself glancing continually at her face, on which the candle-light shone. The Vicomtesse might have been four and twenty. Save for the soberer gown she wore, she seemed scarce older than the young girl in the miniature who had the presence of a woman of the world. Suddenly I discovered with a flush that she was looking at me intently, without embarrassment, but with an expression that seemed to hint of humor in the situation. To my astonishment, she laughed a little.

"You are a very odd person, Mr. Ritchie," she said.

"I have heard so much of you from Mrs. Temple, from Antoinette, that I know something of your strange life. After all," she added with a trace of sadness, "it has been no stranger than my own. First I will answer your questions, and then I shall ask some."

"But I have asked no questions, Madame la Vicomtesse," I said.

"And you are a very simple person, Mr. Ritchie," continued Madame la Vicomtesse, smiling; "it is what I had been led to suppose. A serious person. As the friend of Mr. Nicholas Temple, as the relation and (may I say?) benefactor of this poor lady here, it is fitting that you should know certain things. I will not weary you with the reasons and events which led to my coming from Europe to New Orleans, except to say that I, like all of my class who have escaped the horrors of the Revolution, am a wanderer, and grateful to Monsieur de St. Gré for the shelter he gives me. His letter reached me in England, and I arrived three months ago."

She hesitated — nay, I should rather say paused, for there was little hesitation in what she did. She paused, as though weighing what she was to say next.

"When I came to Les Îles I saw that there was a sorrow weighing upon the family; and it took no great astuteness on my part, Mr. Ritchie, to discover that Antoinette was the cause of it. One has only to see Antoinette to love her. I wondered why she had not married. And yet I saw that there had been an affair. It seemed very strange to me, Mr. Ritchie, for with us, you understand, marriages are arranged. Antoinette really has beauty, she is the daughter of a man of importance in the colony, her strength of character saves her from being listless. I found a girl with originality of expression, with a sense of the fitness of things, devoted to charitable works, who had not taken the veil. That was on her father's account. As you know, they are inseparable. Monsieur Philippe de St. Gré is a remarkable man, with certain vigorous ideas not in accordance with the customs of his neighbors. It was he who first confided in me that he would not force Antoinette

to marry; it was she, at length, who told me the story of Nicholas Temple and his mother." She paused again, and, reading between the lines, I perceived that Madame la Vicomtesse had become essential to the household at Les Îles. Philippe de St. Gré was not a man to misplace a confidence.

"It was then that I first heard of you, Mr. Ritchie, and of the part which you played in that affair. It was then I had my first real insight into Antoinette's character. Her affection for Mrs. Temple astonished me, bewildered me. The woman had deceived her and her family, and yet Antoinette gave up her lover because he would not take his mother back. Had Mrs. Temple been willing to return to Les Îles after you had providentially taken her away, they would have received her. Philippe de St. Gré is not a man to listen to criticism. As it was, Antoinette did not rest until she found where Mrs. Temple had hidden herself, and then she came here to her. It is not for us to judge any of them. In sending Antoinette away the poor lady denied herself the only consolation that was left to her. Antoinette understood. Every week she has had news of Mrs. Temple from Mr. Clark. And when I came and learned her trouble, Antoinette begged me to come here and be Mrs. Temple's friend. Mr. Ritchie, she is a very ill woman and a very sad woman, — the saddest woman I have ever known, and I have seen many."

"And Mademoiselle de St. Gré?" I asked.

"Tell me about this man for whom Antoinette has ruined her life," said Madame la Vicomtesse, brusquely. "Is he worth it? No, no man is worth what she has suffered. What has become of him? Where is he? Did you not tell her that you would bring him back?"

"I said that I would bring him back if I could," I answered, "and I meant it, Madame."

Madame la Vicomtesse bit her lip. Had she known me better, she might have smiled. As for me, I was wholly puzzled to account for these fleeting changes in her humor.

"You have taken a great deal upon your shoulders, Mr. Ritchie," she said. "They are from all accounts broad

ones. There, I was wrong to be indignant in your presence, — you who seem to have spent your life in trying to get others out of difficulties. Mercy," she said, with a quick gesture at my protest, "there are few men with whom one might talk thus in so short an acquaintance. I love the girl, and I cannot help being angry with Mr. Temple. I suppose there is something to be said on his side. Let us hear it — I dare say he could not have a better advocate," she finished, with an indefinable smile.

I began at the wrong end of my narrative, and it was some time before I had my facts arranged in proper sequence. I could not forget that Madame la Vicomtesse was looking at me fixedly. I reviewed Nick's neglected childhood; painted as well as I might his temperament and character — his generosity and fearlessness, his recklessness and improvidence. His loyalty to those he loved, his detestation of those he hated. I told how, under these conditions, the sins and vagaries of his parents had gone far to wreck his life at the beginning of it. I told how I had found him again with Sevier, how he had come to New Orleans with me the first time, how he had loved Antoinette, and how he had disappeared after the dreadful scene in the garden at Les Îles, how I had not seen him again for five years. Here I hesitated, little knowing how to tell the Vicomtesse of that affair in Louisville. Though I had a sense that I could not keep the truth from so discerning a person, I was startled to find this to be so.

"Yes, yes, I understand," she said quickly. "And in the morning he had flown with that most worthy of my relatives, Auguste de St. Gré."

I looked at her, finding no words to express my astonishment at this perspicacity.

"And now what do you intend to do?" she asked. "Find him in New Orleans, if you can, of course. But how?" She rose quickly, went to the fireplace, and stood for a moment with her back to me. Suddenly she turned. "It ought not to be difficult, after all. Auguste de St. Gré is a fool, and he confirms what you say of the expedition. He is, indeed, a pretty person to choose for an

intrigue of this kind. And your cousin, — what shall we call him?"

"To say the least, secrecy is not Nick's forte," I answered, catching her mood.

She was silent awhile.

"It would be a blessing if Monsieur le Baron could hang Auguste privately. As for your cousin, he may be worth saving, after all. I know Monsieur de Carondelet, and he has no patience with conspirators of this sort. I think he would not hesitate to make examples of them. However, we will try to save them."

"We!" I repeated unwittingly.

Madame la Vicomtesse looked at me and laughed outright.

"Yes," she said, "you will do some things, I others. There are the gaming clubs with their ridiculous names, *L'Amour*, *La Mignonne*, *La Désirée*" (she counted them reflectively on her fingers). "Both of our gentlemen might be tempted into one of these. You will drop into them, Mr. Ritchie. Then there is Madame Bouvet's."

"Auguste would scarcely go there," I objected.

"Ah," said Madame la Vicomtesse, "but Madame Bouvet will know the names of some of Auguste's intimates. This Bouvet is evidently a good person, perhaps she will do more for you. I understand that she has a weak spot in her heart for Auguste."

Madame la Vicomtesse turned her back again. Had she heard how Madame Bouvet had begged me to buy the miniature?

"Have you any other suggestions to make?" she said, putting a foot on the fender.

"They have all been yours, so far," I answered.

"And yet you are a man of action, of expedients," she murmured, without turning. "Where are your wits, Mr. Ritchie? Have you any plan?"

"I have been so used to rely on myself, Madame," I replied.

"That you do not like to have your affairs meddled with by a woman," she said, into the fireplace.

"I give you the credit to believe that you are too clever to misunderstand me, Madame," I said. "You must know that your help is most welcome."

At that she swung around and regarded me strangely, mirth lurking in her eyes. She seemed about to retort, and then to conquer the impulse. The effect of this was to make me anything but self-complacent. She sat down in the chair and for a little while she was silent.

"Suppose we do find them," she said suddenly. "What shall we do with them?" She looked up at me questioningly, seriously. "Is it likely that your Mr. Temple will be reconciled with his mother? Is it likely that he is still in love with Antoinette?"

"I think it is likely that he is still in love with Mademoiselle de St. Gré," I answered, "though I have no reason for saying so."

"You are very honest, Mr. Ritchie. We must look at this problem from all sides. If he is not reconciled with his mother, Antoinette will not receive him. And if he is, we have the question to consider whether he is still worthy of her. The agents of Providence must not be heedless," she added with a smile.

"I am sure that Nick would alter his life if it became worth living," I said. "I will answer for that much."

"Then he must be reconciled with his mother," she replied with decision. "Mrs. Temple has suffered enough. And he must be found before he gets sufficiently into the bad graces of the Baron de Carondelet, — these two things are clear." She rose. "Come here to-morrow evening at the same time."

She started quickly for the bedroom door, but something troubled me still.

"Madame — " I said.

"Yes," she answered, turning quickly.

I did not know how to begin. There were many things I wished to say, to know, but she was a woman whose mind seemed to leap the chasms, whose words touched only upon those points which might not be understood. She regarded me with seeming patience.

"I should think that Mrs. Temple might have recognized you," I said, for want of a better opening.

"From the miniature?" she said.

I flushed furiously, and it seemed to burn me through the lining of my pocket.

"That was my salvation," she said. "Mrs. Temple has never seen the miniature. I have heard how you rescued it, Mr. Ritchie," she added, with a curious smile. "Monsieur Philippe de St. Gré told me."

"Then he knew?" I stammered.

She laughed.

"I have told you that you are a very simple person," she said. "Even you are not given to intrigues. I thank you for rescuing me."

I flushed more hotly than before.

"I never expected to see you," I said.

"It must have been a shock," she said.

I was dumb. I had my hand in my coat; I fully intended to give her the miniature. It was my plain duty. And suddenly, overwhelmed, I remembered that it was wrapped in Polly Ann's silk handkerchief.

Madame la Vicomtesse remained for a moment where she was.

"Do not do anything until the morning," she said. "You must go back to your lodgings at once."

"That would be to lose time," I answered.

"You must think of yourself a little," she said. "Do as I say. I have heard that two cases of the yellow fever have broken out this afternoon. And you, who are not used to the climate, must not be out after dark."

"And you?" I said.

"I am used to it," she replied; "I have been here three months. Lest anything should happen, it might be well for you to give me your address."

"I am with Madame Gravois, in the Rue Bienville."

"Madame Gravois, in the Rue Bienville," she repeated. "I shall remember. *À demain*, Monsieur." She courtesied and went swiftly into Mrs. Temple's room. Seizing my hat, I opened the door and found myself in the dark street.

CHAPTER VII

THE DISPOSAL OF THE SIEUR DE ST. GRÉ

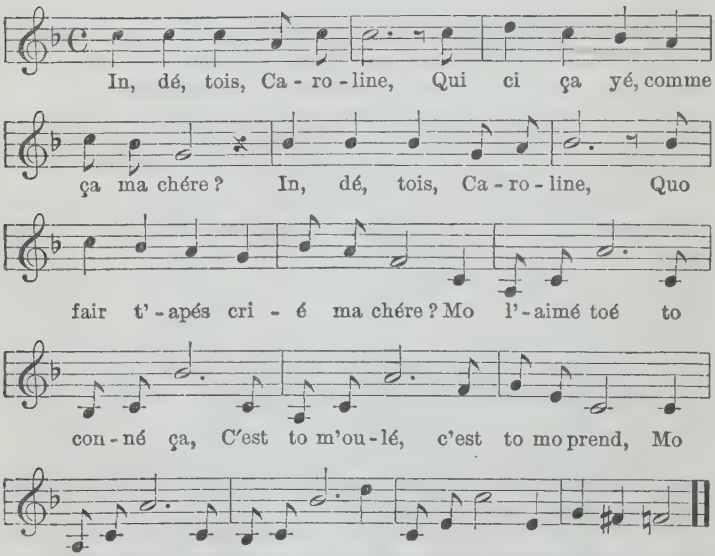
I HAD met Hélène de St. Gré at last. And what a fool she must think me! As I hurried along the dark banquettes this thought filled my brain for a time to the exclusion of all others, so strongly is vanity ingrained in us. After all, what did it matter what she thought, — Madame la Vicomtesse d'Ivry-le-Tour? I had never shone, and it was rather late to begin. But I possessed, at least, average common sense, and I had given no proof even of this.

I wandered on, not heeding the command which she had given me, — to go home. The scent of camellias and magnolias floated on the heavy air of the night from the court-yards, reminding me of her. Laughter and soft voices came from the galleries. Despite the Terror, despite the *Faubourg Saint-Antoine*, despite the Rights of Man and the wars and suffering arising therefrom, despite the scourge which might come to-morrow, life went gayly on. The cabarets echoed, and behind the tight blinds lines of light showed where the Creole gentry gamed at their tables, perchance in the very clubs Madame la Vicomtesse had mentioned.

The moon, in her first quarter, floated in a haze. Washed by her light, the quaintly wrought balconies and heavy-tiled roofs of the Spanish buildings, risen from the charred embers, took on a touch of romance. I paused once with a twinge of remembrance before the long line of the Ursuline convent, with its latticed belfry against the sky. There was the lodge, with its iron gates shut, and the wall which Nick had threatened to climb. As I passed the great square of the new barracks, a sereno (so the night watchmen were called) was crying the hour. I came

to the rambling market-stalls, casting black shadows on the river road, — empty now, to be filled in the morning with shouting *marchands*. The promenade under the willows was deserted, the great river stretched away under the moon towards the forest line of the farther shore, filmy and indistinct. A black wisp of smoke rose from the gunwale of a flatboat, and I stopped to listen to the weird song of a negro, which I have heard many times since.

CAROLINE.


In, dé, tois, Ca - ro - line, Qui ci ça yé, comme
ça ma chére ? In, dé, tois, Ca - ro - line, Quo
fair t' - apés cri - é ma chére ? Mo l' - aimé toé to
con - né ça, C'est to m'ou - lé, c'est to mo prend, Mo
l'-aimé toé, to con-né ca - a c'est to m'oulé c'est to mo prend.

Gaining the promenade, I came presently to the new hotel which had been built for the Governor, with its balconied windows looking across the river — the mansion of Monsieur le Baron de Carondelet. Even as I sat on the bench in the shadow of the willows, watching the sentry who paced before the arched entrance, I caught sight of a man stealing along the banquette on the other

side of the road. Twice he paused to look behind him, and when he reached the corner of the street he stopped for some time to survey the Governor's house opposite.

Suddenly I was on my feet, every sense alert, staring. In the moonlight, made milky by the haze, he was indistinct. And yet I could have taken oath that the square, diminutive figure, with the head set forward on the shoulders, was Gignoux's. If this man were not Gignoux, then the Lord had cast two in a strange mould.

And what was Gignoux doing in New Orleans? As if in answer to the question two men emerged from the dark archway of the Governor's house, passed the sentry, and stood for an instant on the edge of the shadow. One wore a long Spanish cloak, and the other a uniform that I could not make out. A word was spoken, and then my man was ambling across to meet them, and the three walked away up Toulouse Street.

I was in a fire of conjecture. I did not dare to pass the sentry and follow them, so I made round as fast as I could by the Rue St. Pierre, which borders the Place d'Armes, and then crossed to Toulouse again by Chartres. The three were nowhere to be seen. I paused on the corner for thought, and at length came to a reluctant but prudent conclusion that I had best go back to my lodging and seek Monsieur early in the morning.

Madame Gravois was awaiting me. Was Monsieur mad to remain out at night? Had Monsieur not heard of the yellow fever? Madame Gravois even had prepared some concoction which she poured out of a bottle, and which I took with the docility of a child. Monsieur Vigo had called, and there was a note. A note? It was a small note. I glanced stupidly at the seal, recognized the swan of the St. Gré crest, broke it, and read: —

"*Mr. Ritchie will confer a favor upon la Vicomtesse d'Ivry-le-Tour if he will come to Monsieur de St. Gré's house at eight to-morrow morning.*"

I bade the reluctant Madame Gravois good night, gained my room, threw off my clothes, and covered myself with

"I am," I answered.

It must have been my readiness that made her smile. Then her eyes rested on mine.

"You look tired, Mr. Ritchie," she said. "You did not obey me and go home last night."

"How did you know that?" I asked, with a thrill at her interest.

"Because Madame Gravois told my messenger that you were out."

I was silent.

"You must take care of yourself," she said briefly. "Come, there are some things which I wish to say to you before Antoinette is ready."

She led me toward the end of the gallery, where a bright screen of morning-glories shaded us from the sun. But we had scarce reached the place ere the sound of steps made us turn, and there was Mademoiselle Antoinette herself facing us. I went forward a few steps, hesitated, and bowed. She courtesied, my name faltering on her lips. Yes, it was Antoinette, not the light-hearted girl whom we had heard singing "*Ma luron*" in the garden, but a woman now with a strange beauty that astonished me. Hers was the dignity that comes from unselfish service, the calm that is far from resignation, though the black veil caught up on her *chapeau de paille* gave her the air of a Sister of Mercy. Antoinette had inherited the energies as well as the features of the St. Grés, yet there was a painful moment as she stood there, striving to put down the agitation the sight of me gave her. As for me, I was bereft of speech, not knowing what to say or how far to go. My last thought was of the remarkable quality in this woman before me which had held her true to Mrs. Temple, and which sent her so courageously to her duty now.

Madame la Vicomtesse, as I had hoped, relieved the situation. She knew how to broach a dreaded subject.

"Mr. Ritchie is going with us, Antoinette," she said. "It is perhaps best to explain everything to him before we start. I was about to tell you, Mr. Ritchie," she continued, turning to me, "that Auguste has given no hint

in his note of Mr. Temple's presence in Louisiana. And yet you told me that they were to have come here together."

"Yes," I answered, "and I have no reason to think they have separated."

"I was merely going to suggest," said the Vicomtesse, firmly, "I was merely going to suggest the possibility of our meeting Mr. Temple with Auguste."

It was Antoinette who answered, with a force that revealed a new side of her character.

"Mr. Temple will not be there," she said, flashing a glance upon us. "Do you think he would come to me—?"

Hélène laid her hand upon the girl's arm.

"My dear, I think nothing," she said quietly; "but it is best for us to be prepared against any surprise. Remember that I do not know Mr. Temple, and that you have not seen him for five years."

"It is not like him, you know it is not like him," exclaimed Antoinette, looking at me.

"I know it is not like him, Mademoiselle," I replied.

Madame la Vicomtesse, from behind the girl, gave me a significant look.

"This occurred to me," she went on in an undisturbed tone, "that Mr. Temple might come with Auguste to protest against the proceeding, — or even to defend himself against the imputation that he was to make use of this money in any way. I wish you to realize, Antoinette, before you decide to go, that you may meet Mr. Temple. Would it not be better to let Mr. Ritchie go alone? I am sure that we could find no better emissary."

"Auguste is here," said Antoinette. "I must see him." Her voice caught. "I may never see him again. He may be ill, he may be starving — and I know that he is in trouble. Whether" (her voice caught) "whether Mr. Temple is with him or not, I mean to go."

"Then it would be well to start," said the Vicomtesse.

Deftly dropping her veil, she picked up a riding whip that lay on the railing and descended the stairs to the courtyard. Antoinette and I followed. As we came through the archway I saw André, Monsieur de St. Gré's mulatto,

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holding open the wicket for us to pass. He helped the ladies to mount the ponies, lengthened my own stirrups for me, swung into the saddle himself, and then the four of us were picking our way down the Rue Chartres at an easy amble. Turning to the right beyond the cool garden of the Ursulines, past the yellow barracks, we came to the river front beside the fortifications. A score of negroes were sweating there in the sun, swinging into position the long logs for the palisades, nearly completed. They were like those of Kaskaskia and our own frontier forts in Kentucky, with a forty-foot ditch in front of them. Seated on a horse talking to the overseer was a fat little man in white linen who pulled off his hat and bowed profoundly to the ladies. His face gave me a start, and then I remembered that I had seen him only the day before, resplendent, coming out of church. He was the Baron de Carondelet.

There was a sentry standing under a crape-myrtle where the Royal Road ran through the gateway. Behind him was a diminutive five-sided brick fort with a dozen little cannon on top of it. The sentry came forward, brought his musket to a salute, and halted before my horse.

"You will have to show your passport," murmured Madame la Vicomtesse.

I drew the document from my pocket. It was signed by De Lemos, and duly countersigned by the officer of the port. The man bowed, and I passed on.

It was a strange, silent ride through the stinging heat to Les Îles, the brown dust hanging behind us like a cloud, to settle slowly on the wayside shrubbery. Across the levee bank the river was low, listless, giving off hot breath like a monster in distress. The forest pools were cracked and dry, the Spanish moss was a haggard gray, and under the sun was the haze which covered the land like a saffron mantle. At times a listlessness came over me such as I had never known, to make me forget the presence of the women at my side, the very errand on which we rode. From time to time I was roused into admiration of the horsemanship of Madame la Vicomtesse, for the restive Texas pony which she rode was stung to madness by the flies.

As for Antoinette, she glanced neither right nor left through her veil, but rode unmindful of the way, heedless of heat and discomfort, erect, motionless save for the easy gait of her horse. At length we turned into the avenue through the forest, lined by wild orange trees, came in sight of the low, belvedered plantation house, and drew rein at the foot of the steps. Antoinette was the first to dismount, and passed in silence through the group of surprised house servants gathering at the door. I assisted the Vicomtesse, who paused to bid the negroes disperse, and we lingered for a moment on the gallery together.

"Poor Antoinette!" she said, "I wish we might have saved her this." She looked up at me. "How she defended him!" she exclaimed.

"She loves him," I answered.

Madame la Vicomtesse sighed.

"I suppose there is no help for it," she said. "But it is very difficult not to be angry with Mr. Temple. The girl cared for his mother, gave her a home, clung to her when he and the world would have cast her off, sacrificed her happiness for them both. If I see him, I believe I shall shake him. And if he doesn't fall down on his knees to her, I shall ask the Baron to hang him. We must bring him to his senses, Mr. Ritchie. He must not leave Louisiana until he sees her. Then he will marry her." She paused, scrutinized me in her quick way, and added: "You see that I take your estimation of his character. You ought to be flattered."

"I am flattered by any confidence you repose in me, Madame la Vicomtesse."

She laughed. I was not flattered then, but cursed myself for the quaint awkwardness in my speech that amused her. And she was astonishingly quick to perceive my moods.

"There, don't be angry. You will never be a courtier, my honest friend, and you may thank God for it. How sweet the shrubs are! Your chief business in life seems to be getting people out of trouble, and I am going to help you with this case."

It was my turn to laugh.

"You are going to help!" I exclaimed. "My services have been heavy, so far."

"You should not walk around at night," she replied irrelevantly.

Suddenly I remembered Gignoux, but even as I was about to tell her of the incident Antoinette appeared in the doorway. She was very pale, but her lips were set with excitement and her eyes shone strangely. She was still in her riding gown, in her hand she carried a leather bag, and behind her stood André with a bundle.

"Quick!" she said; "we are wasting time, and he may be gone."

Checking an exclamation which could hardly have been complimentary to Auguste, the Vicomtesse crossed quickly to her and put her arm about her.

"We will follow you, *mignonne*," she said in French.

"Must you come?" said Antoinette, appealingly. "He may not appear if he sees any one."

"We shall have to risk that," said the Vicomtesse, dryly, with a glance at me. "You shall not go alone, but we will wait a few moments at the hedge."

We took the well-remembered way through the golden-green light under the trees, Antoinette leading, and the sight of the garden brought back to me poignantly the scene in the moonlight with Mrs. Temple. There was no sound save the languid morning notes of the birds and the humming of the bees among the flowers as Antoinette went tremblingly down the path and paused, listening, under the branches of that oak where I had first beheld her. Then, with a little cry, we saw her run forward — into the arms of Auguste de St. Gré. It was a pitiful thing to look upon.

Antoinette had led her brother to the seat under the oak. How long we waited I know not, but at length we heard their voices raised, and without more ado Madame la Vicomtesse, beckoning me, passed quickly through the gap in the hedge and went towards them. I followed with André. Auguste rose with an oath, and then stood

facing his cousin like a man struck dumb, his hands dropped. He was a sorry sight indeed, unshaven, unkempt, dark circles under his eyes, clothes torn.

"Hélène! You here — in America!" he cried in French, staring at her.

"Yes, Auguste," she replied quite simply, "I am here." He would have come towards her, but there was a note in her voice which arrested him.

"And Monsieur le Vicomte — Henri?" he said.

I found myself listening tensely for the answer.

"Henri is in Austria, fighting for his King, I hope," said Madame la Vicomtesse.

"So Madame la Vicomtesse is a refugee," he said with a bow and a smile that made me very angry.

"And Monsieur de St. Gré?" I asked.

At the sound of my voice he started and gave back, for he had not perceived me. He recovered his balance, such as it was, instantly.

"Monsieur seems to take an extraordinary interest in my affairs," he said jauntily.

"Only when they are to the detriment of other persons who are my friends," I said.

"Monsieur has intruded in a family matter," said Auguste, grandly, still in French.

"By invitation of those most concerned, Monsieur," I answered, for I could have throttled him.

Auguste had developed. He had learned well that effrontery is often the best weapon of an adventurer. He turned from me disdainfully, petulantly, and addressed the Vicomtesse once more.

"I wish to be alone with Antoinette," he said.

"No doubt," said the Vicomtesse.

"I demand it," said Auguste.

"The demand is not granted," said the Vicomtesse; "that is why we have come. Your sister has already made enough sacrifices for you. I know you, Monsieur Auguste de St. Gré," she continued with quiet contempt. "It is not for love of Antoinette that you have sought this meeting. It is because," she said, riding down a torrent of

words which began to escape from him, "it is because you are in a predicament, as usual, and you need money."

"Hélène!"

It was Antoinette who spoke. She had risen, and was standing behind Auguste. She still held the leather bag in her hand.

"Perhaps the sum is not enough," she said; "he has to get to France. Perhaps we could borrow more until my father comes home." She looked questioningly at us.

Madame la Vicomtesse was truly a woman of decision. Without more ado she took the bag from Antoinette's unresisting hands and put it into mine. I was no less astonished than the rest of them.

"Mr. Ritchie will keep this until the negotiations are finished," said the Vicomtesse.

"Negotiations!" cried Auguste, beside himself. "This is insolence, Madame."

"Be careful, sir," I said.

"Auguste!" cried Antoinette, putting her hand on his arm.

"Why did you tell them?" he demanded, turning on her.

"Because I trust them, Auguste," Antoinette answered. She spoke without anger, as one whose sorrow has put her beyond it. Her speech had a dignity and force which might have awed a worthier man. His disappointment and chagrin brought him beyond bounds.

"You trust them!" he cried, "you trust them when they tell you to give your brother, who is starving and in peril of his life, eight hundred livres? Eight hundred livres, *pardieu*, and your brother!"

"It is all I have, Auguste," said his sister, sadly.

"Ha!" he said dramatically, "I see, they seek my destruction. This man" — pointing at me — "is a Federalist, and Madame la Vicomtesse" — he bowed ironically — "is a Royalist."

"Pish!" said the Vicomtesse, impatiently, "it would be an easy matter to have you sent to the Morro — a word to Monsieur de Carondelet, Auguste. Do you believe for

a moment that, in your father's absence, I would have allowed Antoinette to come here alone? And it was a happy circumstance that I could call on such a man as Mr. Ritchie to come with us."

"It seems to me that Mr. Ritchie and his friends have already brought sufficient misfortune on the family."

It was a villanous speech. Antoinette turned away, her shoulders quivering, and I took a step towards him; but Madame la Vicomtesse made a swift gesture, and I stopped, I know not why. She gave an exclamation so sharp that he flinched physically, as though he had been struck. But it was characteristic of her that when she began to speak, her words cut rather than lashed.

"Auguste de St. Gré," she said, "I know you. The Tribunal is merciful compared to you. There is no one on earth whom you would not torture for your selfish ends, no one whom you would not sell without compunction for your pleasure. There are things that a woman should not mention, and yet I would tell them without shame to your face were it not for your sister. If it were not for her, I would not have you in my presence. Shall I speak of your career in France? There is Valenciennes, for example —"

She stopped abruptly. The man was gray, but not on his account did the Vicomtesse stay her speech. She forgot him as though he did not exist, and by one of those swift transitions which thrilled me had gone to the sobbing Antoinette and taken her in her arms, murmuring endearments of which our language is not capable. I, too, forgot Auguste. But no rebuke, however stinging, could make him forget himself, and before we realized it he was talking again. He had changed his tactics.

"This is my home," he said, "where I might expect shelter and comfort. You make me an outcast."

Antoinette disengaged herself from Hélène with a cry, but he turned away from her and shrugged.

"A stranger would have fared better. Perhaps you will have more consideration for a stranger. There is a French ship at the *Terre aux Bœufs* in the English Turn,

which sails to-night. I appeal to you, Mr. Ritchie," — he was still talking in French — "I appeal to you, who are a man of affairs," — and he swept me a bow, — "if a captain would risk taking a fugitive to France for eight hundred livres? *Pardieu*, I could get no farther than the Balize for that. Monsieur," he added meaningly, "you have an interest in this. There are two of us to go."

The amazing effrontery of this move made me gasp. Yet it was neither the Vicomtesse nor myself who answered him. We turned by common impulse to Antoinette, and she was changed. Her breath came quickly, her eyes flashed, her anger made her magnificent.

"It is not true," she cried, "you know it is not true."

He lifted his shoulders and smiled.

"You are my brother, and I am ashamed to acknowledge you. I was willing to give my last sou, to sell my belongings, to take from the poor to help you — until you defamed a good man. You cannot make me believe," she cried, unheeding the color that surged into her cheeks, "you cannot make me believe that he would use this money. You cannot make me believe it."

"Let us do him the credit of thinking that he means to repay it," said Auguste.

Antoinette's eyes filled with tears, — tears of pride, of humiliation, ay, and of an anger of which I had not thought her capable. She was indeed a superb creature then, a personage I had not imagined. Gathering up her gown, she passed Auguste and turned on him swiftly.

"If you were to bring that to him," she said, pointing to the bag in my hand, "he would not so much as touch it. To-morrow I shall go to the Ursulines, and I thank God I shall never see you again. I thank God I shall no longer be your sister. Give Monsieur the bundle," she said to the frightened André, who still stood by the hedge; "he may need food and clothes for his journey."

She left us. We stood watching her until her gown had disappeared amongst the foliage. André came forward and held out the bundle to Auguste, who took it mechanically. Then Madame la Vicomtesse motioned to André

to leave, and gave me a glance, and it was part of the deep understanding of her I had that I took its meaning. I had my forebodings of what this last conversation with Auguste might bring forth, and I wished heartily that we were rid of him.

"Monsieur de St. Gré," I said, "I understood you to say that a ship is lying at the English Turn some five leagues below us, on which you are to take passage at once."

He turned and glared at me, some devilish retort on his lips which he held back. Suddenly he became suave.

"I shall want two thousand livres, Monsieur; it was the sum I asked for."

"It is not a question of what you asked for," I answered.

"Since when did Monsieur assume this intimate position in my family?" he said, glancing at the Vicomtesse.

"Monsieur de St. Gré," I replied with difficulty, "you will confine yourself to the matter in hand. You are in no situation to demand terms; you must take or leave what is offered you. Last night the man called Gignoux, who was of your party, was at the Governor's house."

At this he started perceptibly.

"Ha, I thought he was a traitor," he cried. Strangely enough, he did not doubt my word in this.

"I am surprised that your father's house has not been searched this morning," I continued, astonished at my own moderation. "The sentiments of the Baron de Carondelet are no doubt known to you, and you are aware that your family or your friends cannot save you if you are arrested. You may have this money on two conditions. The first is that you leave the province immediately. The second, that you reveal the whereabouts of Mr. Nicholas Temple."

"Monsieur is very kind," he replied, and added the taunt, "and well versed in the conduct of affairs of money."

"Does Monsieur de St. Gré accept?" I asked.

He threw out his hands with a gesture of resignation.

"Who am I to accept?" he said, "a fugitive, an outcast. And I should like to remind Monsieur that time passes."

"It is a sensible observation," said I, meaning that it was the first. His sudden docility made me suspicious. "What preparations have you made to go?"

"They are not elaborate, Monsieur, but they are complete. When I leave you I step into a pirogue which is tied to the river bank."

"Ah," I replied. "And Mr. Temple?"

Madame la Vicomtesse smiled, for Auguste was fairly caught. He had not the astuteness to be a rogue; oddly, he had the sense to know that he could fool us no longer.

"Temple is at Lamarque's," he answered sullenly.

I glanced questioningly at the Vicomtesse.

"Lamarque is an old pensioner of Monsieur de St. Gré's," said she; "he has a house and an arpent of land not far below here."

"Exactly," said Auguste, "and if Mr. Ritchie believes that he will save money by keeping Mr. Temple in Louisiana instead of giving him this opportunity to escape, it is no concern of mine."

I reflected a moment on this, for it was another sensible remark.

"It is indeed no concern of yours," said Madame la Vicomtesse.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"And now," he said, "I take it that there are no further conscientious scruples against my receiving this paltry sum."

"I will go with you to your pirogue," I answered; "when you embark you shall have it."

"I, too, will go," said Madame la Vicomtesse.

"You overwhelm me with civility, Madame," said the Sieur de St. Gré, bowing low.

"Lead the way, Monsieur," I said.

He took his bundle, and started off down the garden path with a grand air. I looked at the Vicomtesse inquiringly, and there was laughter in her eyes.

"I must show you the way to Lamarque's." And then she whispered, "You have done well, Mr. Ritchie."

I did not return her look, but waited until she took the

path ahead of me. In silence we followed Auguste through the depths of the woods, turning here and there to avoid a fallen tree or a sink-hole where the water still remained. At length we came out in the glare of the sun and crossed the dusty road to the levee bank. Some forty yards below us was the canoe, and we walked to it, still in silence. Auguste flung in his bundle, and turned to us.

"Perhaps Monsieur is satisfied," he said.

I handed him the bag, and he took it with an elaborate air of thankfulness. Nay, the rascal opened it as if to assure himself that he was not tricked at the last. At the sight of the gold and silver which Antoinette had hastily collected, he turned to Madame la Vicomtesse.

"Should I have the good fortune to meet Monsieur le Vicomte in France, I shall assure him that Madame is in good hands" (he swept an exultant look at me) "and enjoying herself."

I could have flung him into the river, money-bag and all. But Madame la Vicomtesse made him a courtesy there on the levee bank, and said sweetly: —

"That is very good of you, Auguste."

"As for you, Monsieur," he said, and now his voice shook with uncontrolled rage, "I am in no condition to repay your kindnesses. But I have no doubt that you will not object to keeping the miniature a while longer."

I was speechless with anger and shame, and though I felt the eyes of the Vicomtesse upon me, I dared not look at her. I heard Auguste but indistinctly as he continued: —

"Should you need the frame, Monsieur, you will doubtless find it still with Monsieur Isadore, the Jew, in the Rue Toulouse." With that he leaped into his boat, seized the paddle, and laughed as he headed into the current. How long I stood watching him as he drifted lazily in the sun I know not, but at length the voice of Madame la Vicomtesse aroused me.

"He is a pleasant person," she said.

CHAPTER VIII

AT LAMARQUE'S

UNTIL then it seemed as if the sun had gotten into my brain and set it on fire. Her words had the strange effect of clearing my head, though I was still in as sad a predicament as ever I found myself. There was the thing in my pocket, still wrapped in Polly Ann's handkerchief. I glanced at the Vicomtesse shyly, and turned away again. Her face was all repressed laughter, the expression I knew so well.

"I think we should feel better in the shade, Mr. Ritchie," she said in English, and, leaping lightly down from the bank, crossed the road again. I followed her, perforce.

"I will show you the way to Lamarque's," she said.

"Madame la Vicomtesse!" I cried.

Had she no curiosity? Was she going to let pass what Auguste had hinted? Lifting up her skirts, she swung round and faced me. In her eyes was a calmness more baffling than the light I had seen there but a moment since. How to begin I knew not, and yet I was launched.

"Madame la Vicomtesse, there was once a certain miniature painted of you."

"By Boze, Monsieur," she answered, readily enough. The embarrassment was all on my side. "We spoke of it last evening. I remember well when it was taken. It was the costume I wore at Chantilly, and Monsieur le Prince complimented me, and the next day the painter himself came to our hotel in the Rue de Bretagne and asked the honor of painting me." She sighed. "Ah, those were happy days! Her Majesty was very angry with me."

"And why?" I asked, forgetful of my predicament.

"For sending it to Louisiana, to Antoinette."

"And why did you send it?"

"A whim," said the Vicomtesse. "I had always written twice a year either to Monsieur de St. Gré or Antoinette, and although I had never seen them, I loved them. Perhaps it was because they had the patience to read my letters and the manners to say they liked them."

"Surely not, Madame," I said. "Monsieur de St. Gré spoke often to me of the wonderful pictures you drew of the personages at court."

Madame la Vicomtesse had an answer on the tip of her tongue. I know now that she spared me.

"And what of this miniature, Monsieur?" she asked. "What became of it after you restored it to its rightful owner?"

I flushed furiously and fumbled in my pocket.

"I obtained it again, Madame," I said.

"You obtained it!" she cried, I am not sure to this day whether in consternation or jest. In passing, it was not just what I wanted to say.

"I meant to give it you last night," I said.

"And why did you not?" she demanded severely.

I felt her eyes on me, and it seemed to me as if she were looking into my very soul. Even had it been otherwise, I could not have told her how I had lived with this picture night and day, how I had dreamed of it, how it had been my inspiration and counsel. I drew it from my pocket, wrapped as it was in the handkerchief, and uncovered it with a reverence which she must have marked, for she turned away to pick a yellow flower by the roadside. I thank Heaven that she did not laugh. Indeed, she seemed to be far from laughter.

"You have taken good care of it, Monsieur," she said. "I thank you."

"It was not mine, Madame," I answered.

"And if it had been?" she asked.

It was a strange prompting.

"If it had been, I could have taken no better care of it," I answered, and I held it towards her.

She took it simply.

"And the handkerchief?" she said.

"The handkerchief was Polly Ann's," I answered.

She stopped to pick a second flower that had grown by the first.

"Who is Polly Ann?" she said.

"When I was eleven years of age and ran away from Temple Bow after my father died, Polly Ann found me in the hills. When she married Tom McChesney they took me across the mountains into Kentucky with them. Polly Ann has been more than a mother to me."

"Oh!" said Madame la Vicomtesse. Then she looked at me with a stranger expression than I had yet seen in her face. She thrust the miniature in her gown, turned, and walked in silence awhile. Then she said: —

"So Auguste sold it again?"

"Yes," I said.

"He seems to have found a ready market only in you," said the Vicomtesse, without turning her head. "Here we are at Lamarque's."

What I saw was a low, weather-beaten cabin on the edge of a clearing, and behind it stretched away in prim rows the vegetables which the old Frenchman had planted. There was a little flower garden, too, and an orchard. A path of beaten earth led to the door, which was open. There we paused. Seated at a rude table was Lamarque himself, his hoary head bent over the cards he held in his hand. Opposite him was Mr. Nicholas Temple, in the act of playing the ace of spades. I think that it was the laughter of Madame la Vicomtesse that first disturbed them, and even then she had time to turn to me.

"I like your cousin," she whispered.

"Is that you, St. Gré?" said Nick. "I wish to the devil you would learn not to sneak. You frighten me. Where the deuce did you go to?"

But Lamarque had seen the lady, stared at her wildly for a moment, and rose, dropping his cards on the floor. He bowed humbly, not without trepidation.

"Madame la Vicomtesse!" he said.

By this time Nick had risen, and he, too, was staring at her. How he managed to appear so well dressed was a puzzle to me.

"Madame," he said, bowing, "I beg your pardon. I thought you were that — I beg your pardon."

"I understand your feelings, sir," answered the Vicomtesse as she courtesied.

"Egad," said Nick, and looked at her again. "Egad, I'll be hanged if it's not —"

It was the first time I had seen the Vicomtesse in confusion. And indeed if it were confusion she recovered instantly.

"You will probably be hanged, sir, if you do not mend your company," she said. "Do you not think so, Mr. Ritchie?"

"Davy!" he cried. And catching sight of me in the doorway, over her shoulder, "Has he followed me here too?" Running past the Vicomtesse, he seized me in his impulsive way and searched my face. "So you have followed me here, old faithful! Madame," he added, turning to the Vicomtesse, "there is some excuse for my getting into trouble."

"What excuse, Monsieur?" she asked. She was smiling, yet looking at us with shining eyes.

"The pleasure of having Mr. Ritchie get me out," he answered. "He has never failed me."

"You are far from being out of this," I said. "If the Baron de Carondelet does not hang you or put you in the Morro, you will not have me to thank. It will be Madame la Vicomtesse d'Ivry-le-Tour."

"Madame la Vicomtesse!" exclaimed Nick, puzzled.

"May I present to you, Madame, Mr. Nicholas Temple?" I asked.

Nick bowed, and she courtesied again.

"So Monsieur le Baron is really after us," said Nick. He opened his eyes, slapped his knee, and laughed. "That may account for the Citizen Captain de St. Gré's absence," he said. "By the way, Davy, you haven't happened by any chance to meet him?"

The Vicomtesse and I exchanged a look of understanding. Relief was plain on her face. It was she who answered.

"We have met him — by chance, Monsieur. He has just left for *Terre aux Bœufs*."

"*Terre aux Bœufs!* What the dev — I beg your pardon, Madame la Vicomtesse, but you give me something of a surprise. Is there another conspiracy at *Terre aux Bœufs*, or — does somebody live there who has never before lent Auguste money?"

Madame la Vicomtesse laughed. Then she grew serious again.

"You did not know where he had gone?" she said.

"I did not even know he had gone," said Nick. "Citizen Lamarque and I were having a little game of piquet — for vegetables. Eh, citizen?"

Madame la Vicomtesse laughed again, and once more the shade of sadness came into her eyes.

"They are the same the world over," she said, — not to me, nor yet to any one there. And I knew that she was thinking of her own kind in France, who faced the guillotine without sense of danger. She turned to Nick. "You may be interested to know, Mr. Temple," she added, "that Auguste is on his way to the English Turn to take ship for France."

Nick regarded her for a moment, and then his face lighted up with that smile which won every one he met, which inevitably made them smile back at him.

"The news is certainly unexpected, Madame," he said. "But then, after one has travelled much with Auguste it is difficult to take a great deal of interest in him. Am I to be sent to France, too?" he asked.

"Not if it can be helped," replied the Vicomtesse, seriously. "Mr. Ritchie will tell you, however, that you are in no small danger. Doubtless you know it. Monsieur le Baron de Carondelet considers that the intrigues of the French Revolutionists in Louisiana have already robbed him of several years of his life. He is not disposed to be lenient towards persons connected with that cause."

"What have you been doing since you arrived here on this ridiculous mission?" I demanded impatiently.

"My cousin is a narrow man, Madame la Vicomtesse," said Nick. "We enjoy ourselves in different ways. I thought there might be some excitement in this matter, and I was sadly mistaken."

"It is not over yet," said the Vicomtesse.

"And Davy," continued Nick, bowing to me, "gets his pleasures and excitement by extracting me from my various entanglements. Well, there is not much to tell. St. Gré and I were joined above Natchez by that little pig, Citizen Gignoux, and we shot past De Lemos in the night. Since then we have been permitted to sleep — no more — at various plantations. We have been waked up at barbarous hours in the morning and handed on, as it were. They were all fond of us, but likewise they were all afraid of the Baron. What day is to-day? Monday? Then it was on Saturday that we lost Gignoux."

"I have reason to think that he has already sold out to the Baron," I put in.

"Eh?"

"I saw him in communication with the police at the Governor's hotel last night," I answered.

Nick was silent for a moment.

"Well," he said, "that may make some excitement." Then he laughed. "I wonder why Auguste didn't think of doing that," he said. "And now, what?"

"How did you get to this house?" I said.

"We came down on Saturday night, after we had lost Gignoux above the city."

"Do you know where you are?" I asked.

"Not I," said Nick. "I have been playing piquet with Lamarque most of the time since I arrived. He is one of the pleasantest men I have met in Louisiana, although a little taciturn, as you perceive, and more than a little deaf. I think he does not like Auguste. He seems to have known him in his youth."

Madame la Vicomtesse looked at him with interest.

"You are at Les Îles, Nick," I said; "you are on Mon-

sieur de St. Gré's plantation, and within a quarter of a mile of his house."

His face became grave all at once. He seized me by both shoulders, and looked into my face.

"You say that we are at Les Îles?" he repeated slowly.

I nodded, seeing the deception which Auguste had evidently practised in order to get him here. Then Nick dropped his arms, went to the door, and stood for a long time with his back turned to us, looking out over the fields. When finally he spoke it was in the tone he used in anger.

"If I had him now, I think I would kill him," he said.

Auguste had deluded him in other things, had run away and deserted him in a strange land. But this matter of bringing him to Les Îles was past pardon. It was another face he turned to the Vicomtesse, a stronger face, a face ennobled by a just anger.

"Madame la Vicomtesse," he said, "I have a vague notion that you are related to Monsieur de St. Gré. I give you my word of honor as a gentleman that I had no thought of trespassing upon him in any way."

"Mr. Temple, we were so sure of that — Mr. Ritchie and I — that we should not have sought for you here otherwise," she replied quickly. Then she glanced at me as though seeking my approval for her next move. It was characteristic of her that she did not now shirk a task imposed by her sense of duty. "We have little time, Mr. Temple, and much to say. Perhaps you will excuse us, Lamarque," she added graciously, in French.

"Madame la Vicomtesse!" said the old man. And, with the tact of his race, he bowed and retired. The Vicomtesse seated herself on one of the rude chairs, and looked at Nick curiously. There was no such thing as embarrassment in her manner, no trace of misgiving that she would not move properly in the affair. Knowing Nick as I did, the difficulty of the task appalled me, for no man was likelier than he to fly off at a misplaced word.

Her beginning was so bold that I held my breath, knowing full well as I did that she had chosen the very note.

"Sit down, Mr. Temple," she said. "I wish to speak to you about your mother."

He stopped like a man who had been struck, straightened, and stared at her as though he had not taken her meaning. Then he swung on me.

"Your mother is in New Orleans," I said. "I would have told you in Louisville had you given me the chance."

"It is an interesting piece of news, David," he answered, "which you might have spared me. Mrs. Temple did not think herself necessary to my welfare when I was young, and now I have learned to live without her."

"Is there no such thing as expiation, Monsieur?" said the Vicomtesse.

"Madame," he said, "she made me what I am, and when I might have redeemed myself she came between me and happiness."

"Monsieur," said the Vicomtesse, "have you ever considered her sufferings?"

He looked at the Vicomtesse with a new interest. She was not so far beyond his experience as mine.

"Her sufferings?" he repeated, and smiled.

"Madame la Vicomtesse should know them," I interrupted; and without heeding her glance of protest I continued, "It is she who has cared for Mrs. Temple."

"You, Madame!" he exclaimed.

"Do not deny your own share in it, Mr. Ritchie," she answered. "As for me, Monsieur," she went on, turning to Nick, "I have done nothing that was not selfish. I have been in the world, I have lived my life, misfortunes have come upon me too. My visits to your mother have been to me a comfort, a pleasure, — for she is a rare person."

"I have never found her so, Madame," he said briefly.

"I am sure it is your misfortune rather than your fault, Mr. Temple. It is because you do not know her now."

Again he looked at me, puzzled, uneasy, like a man who would run if he could. But by a kind of fascination his eyes went back to this woman who dared a subject sore

to the touch — who pressed it gently, but with determination, never doubting her powers, yet with a kindness and sympathy of tone which few women of the world possess. The Vicomtesse began to speak again, evenly, gently.

"Mr. Temple," said she, "I am merely going to tell you some things which I am sure you do not know, and when I have finished I shall not appeal to you. It would be useless for me to try to influence you, and from what Mr. Ritchie and others have told me of your character I am sure that no influence will be necessary. And," she added, with a smile, "it would be much more comfortable for us both if you sat down."

He obeyed her without a word. No wonder Madame la Vicomtesse had had an influence at court.

"There!" she said. "If any reference I am about to make gives you pain, I am sorry." She paused briefly. "After Mr. Ritchie took your mother from here to New Orleans, some five years ago, she rented a little house in the Rue Bourbon with a screen of yellow and red tiles at the edge of the roof. It is on the south side, next to the corner of the Rue St. Philippe. There she lives absolutely alone, except for a servant. Mr. Clark, who has charge of her affairs, was the only person she allowed to visit her. For her pride, however misplaced, and for her spirit we must all admire her. The friend who discovered where she was, who went to her and implored Mrs. Temple to let her stay, she refused."

"The friend?" he repeated in a low tone. I scarcely dared to glance at the Vicomtesse.

"Yes, it was Antoinette," she answered. He did not reply, but his eyes fell. "Antoinette went to her, would have comforted her, would have cared for her, but your mother sent her away. For five years she has lived there, Mr. Temple, alone with her past, alone with her sorrow and remorse. You must draw the picture for yourself. If the world has a more terrible punishment, I have not heard of it. And when, some months ago, I came, and Antoinette sent me to her —"

"Sent you to her!" he said, raising his head quickly.

"Under another name than my own," Hélène continued, apparently taking no notice of his interruption. She leaned toward him and her voice faltered. "I found your mother dying."

He said nothing, but got to his feet and walked slowly to the door, where he stood looking out again. I felt for him, I would have gone to him then had it not been for the sense in me that Hélène did not wish it. As for Hélène, she sat waiting for him to turn back to her, and at length he did.

"Yes?" he said.

"It is her heart, Mr. Temple, that we fear the most. Last night I thought the end had come. It cannot be very far away now. Sorrow and remorse have killed her, Monsieur. The one thing that she has prayed for through the long nights is that she might see you once again and obtain your forgiveness. God Himself does not withhold forgiveness, Mr. Temple," said the Vicomtesse, gently. "Shall any of us presume to?"

A spasm of pain crossed his face, and then his expression hardened.

"I might have been a useful man," he said; "she ruined my life —"

"And you will allow her to ruin the rest of it?" asked the Vicomtesse.

He stared at her.

"If you do not go to her and forgive her, you will remember it until you die," she said.

He sank down on the chair opposite to her, his head bowed into his hands, his elbows on the table among the cards. At length I went and laid my hands upon his shoulder, and at my touch he started. Then he did a singular thing, an impulsive thing, characteristic of the old Nick I had known. He reached across the table and seized the hand of Madame la Vicomtesse. She did not resist, and her smile I shall always remember. It was the smile of a woman who has suffered, and understands.

"I will go to her, Madame!" he said, springing to his feet. "I will go to her. I — I was wrong."

She rose, too, he still clinging to her hand, she still unresisting. His eye fell upon me.

"Where is my hat, Davy?" he asked.

The Vicomtesse withdrew her hand and looked at me.

"Alas, it is not quite so simple as that, Mr. Temple," she said; "Monsieur de Carondelet has first to be reckoned with."

"She is dying, you say? then I will go to her. After that Monsieur de Carondelet may throw me into prison, may hang me, may do anything he chooses. But I will go to her."

I glanced anxiously at the Vicomtesse, well knowing how wilful he was when aroused. Admiration was in her eyes, seeing that he was heedless of his own danger.

"You would not get through the gates of the city. Monsieur le Baron requires passports now," she said.

At that he began to pace the little room, his hands clenched.

"I could use your passport, Davy," he cried. "Let me have it."

"Pardon me, Mr. Temple, I do not think you could," said the Vicomtesse. I flushed. I suppose the remark was not to be resisted.

"Then I will go to-night," he said, with determination. "It will be no trouble to steal into the city. You say the house has yellow and red tiles, and is near the Rue St. Philippe?"

Hélène laid her fingers on his arm.

"Listen, Monsieur, there is a better way," she said. "Monsieur le Baron is doubtless very angry with you, and I am sure that this is chiefly because he does not know you. For instance, if some one were to tell him that you are a straightforward, courageous young man, a gentleman with an unquenchable taste for danger, that you are not a low-born adventurer and intriguer, that you have nothing in particular against his government, he might not be quite so angry. Pardon me if I say that he is not disposed to take your expedition any more seriously than is your own Federal government. The little Baron

is irascible, choleric, stern, or else good-natured, good-hearted, and charitable, just as one happens to take him. As we say in France, it is not well to strike flint and steel in his presence. He might blow up and destroy one. Suppose some one were to go to Monsieur de Carondelet and tell him what a really estimable person you are, and assure him that you will go quietly out of his province at the first opportunity, and be good, so far as he is concerned, forever after? Mark me, I merely say *suppose*. I do not know how far things have gone, or what he may have heard. But suppose a person whom I have reason to believe he likes and trusts and respects, a person who understands his vagaries, should go to him on such an errand."

"And where is such a person to be found," said Nick, amused in spite of himself.

Madame la Vicomtesse courtesied.

"Monsieur, she is before you," she said.

"Egad," he cried, "do you mean to say, Madame, that you will go to the Baron on my behalf?"

"As soon as I ever get to town," she said. "He will have to be waked from his siesta, and he does not like that."

"But he will forgive you," said Nick, quick as a flash.

"I have reason to believe he will," said Madame la Vicomtesse.

"Faith," cried Nick, "he would not be flesh and blood if he didn't."

At that the Vicomtesse laughed, and her eye rested judicially on me. I was standing rather glumly, I fear, in the corner.

"Are you going to take him with you?" said Nick.

"I was thinking of it," said the Vicomtesse. "Mr. Ritchie knows you, and he is such a reliable and reputable person."

Nick bowed.

"You should have seen him marching in a Jacobin procession, Madame," he said.

"He follows his friends into strange places," she retorted.

"And now, Mr. Temple," she added, "may we trust you to stay here with Lamarque until you have word from us?"

"You know I cannot stay here," he cried.

"And why not, Monsieur?"

"If I were captured here, I should get Monsieur de St. Gré into trouble; and besides," he said, with a touch of coldness, "I cannot be beholden to Monsieur de St. Gré. I cannot remain on his land."

"As for getting Monsieur de St. Gré into trouble, his own son could not involve him with the Baron," answered Madame la Vicomtesse. "And it seems to me, Monsieur, that you are already so far beholden to Monsieur de St. Gré that you cannot quibble about going a little more into his debt. Come, Mr. Temple, how has Monsieur de St. Gré ever offended you?"

"Madame —" he began.

"Monsieur," she said, with an air not to be denied, "I believe I can discern a point of honor as well as you. I fail to see that you have a case."

He was indeed no match for her. He turned to me appealingly, his brows bent, but I had no mind to meddle. He swung back to her.

"But Madame —!" he cried.

She was arranging the cards neatly on the table.

"Monsieur, you are tiresome," she said. "What is it now?"

He took a step toward her, speaking in a low tone, his voice shaking. But, true to himself, he spoke plainly. As for me, I looked on frightened, — as though watching a contest, — almost agape to see what a clever woman could do.

"There is — Mademoiselle de St. Gré —"

"Yes, there is Mademoiselle de St. Gré," repeated the Vicomtesse, toying with the cards.

His face lighted, though his lips twitched with pain.

"She is still —"

"She is still Mademoiselle de St. Gré, Monsieur, if that is what you mean."

"And what will she think if I stay here?"

"Ah, do you care what she thinks, Mr. Temple?" said the Vicomtesse, raising her head quickly. "From what I have heard, I should not have thought you could."

"God help me," he answered simply, "I do care."

Hélène's eyes softened as she looked at him, and my pride in him was never greater than at that moment.

"Mr. Temple," she said gently, "remain where you are and have faith in us. I begin to see now why you are so fortunate in your friends." Her glance rested for a brief instant on me. "Mr. Ritchie and I will go to New Orleans, talk to the Baron, and send André at once with a message. If it is in our power, you shall see your mother very soon."

She held out her hand to him, and he bent and kissed it reverently, with an ease I envied. He followed us to the door. And when the Vicomtesse had gone a little way down the path she looked at him over her shoulder.

"Do not despair, Mr. Temple," she said.

It was an answer to a yearning in his face. He gripped me by the shoulders.

"God bless you, Davy," he whispered, and added, "God bless you both."

I overtook her where the path ran into the forest's shade, and for a long while I walked after her, not breaking her silence, my eyes upon her, a strange throbbing in my forehead which I did not heed. At last, when the perfumes of the flowers told us we were nearing the garden, she turned to me.

"I like Mr. Temple," she said, again.

"He is an honest gentleman," I answered.

"One meets very few of them," she said, speaking in a low voice. "You and I will go to the Governor. And after that, have you any idea where you will go?"

"No," I replied, troubled by her regard.

"Then I will tell you. I intend to send you to Madame Gravois's, and she will compel you to go to bed and rest. I do not mean to allow you to kill yourself."

CHAPTER IX

MONSIEUR LE BARON

THE sun beat down mercilessly on thatch and terrace, the yellow walls flung back the quivering heat, as Madame la Vicomtesse and I walked through the empty streets towards the Governor's house. We were followed by André and Madame's maid. The sleepy orderly started up from under the archway at our approach, bowed profoundly to Madame, looked askance at me, and declared, with a thousand regrets, that Monsieur le Baron was having his siesta.

"Then you will wake him," said Madame la Vicomtesse.

Wake Monsieur le Baron! *Bueno Dios*, did Madame understand what it meant to wake his Excellency? His Excellency would at first be angry, no doubt. Angry? As an Andalusian bull, Madame. Once, when his Excellency had first come to the province, he, the orderly, had presumed to awake him.

"*Assez!*" said Madame, so suddenly that the man straightened and looked at her again. "You will wake Monsieur le Baron, and tell him that Madame la Vicomtesse d'Ivry-le-Tour has something of importance to say to him."

Madame had the air, and a title carried with a Spanish soldier in New Orleans in those days. The orderly fairly swept the ground and led us through a court where the sun drew bewildering hot odors from the fruits and flowers, into a darkened room which was the Baron's cabinet. I remember it vaguely, for my head was hot and throbbing from my exertions in such a climate. It was a new room, — the hotel being newly built, — with white walls, a

picture of his Catholic Majesty and the royal arms of Spain, a map of Louisiana, another of New Orleans fortified, some walnut chairs, a desk with ink and sand and a seal, and a window, the closed lattice shutters of which showed streaks of light green light. These doubtless opened on the Royal Road and looked across the levee esplanade on the waters of the Mississippi. Madame la Vicomtesse seated herself, and with a gesture which was an order bade me do likewise.

"He will be angry, the dear Baron," she said. "He is harassed to death with republics. No offence, Mr. Ritchie. He is up at dawn looking to the forts and palisades to guard against such foolish enterprises as this of Mr. Temple's. And to be waked out of a well-earned siesta — to save a gentleman who has come here to make things unpleasant for him — is carrying a joke a little far. *Mais — que voulez-vous?*"

She gave a little shrug to her slim shoulders as she smiled at me, and she seemed not a whit disturbed concerning the conversation with his Excellency. I wondered whether this were birth, or training, or both, or a natural ability to cope with affairs. The women of her order had long been used to intercede with sovereigns, to play a part in matters of state. Suddenly I became aware that she was looking at me.

"What are you thinking of?" she demanded, and continued without waiting for a reply, "you strange man."

"I was thinking how odd it was," I replied, "that I should have known you all these years by a portrait, that we should finally be thrown together, and that you should be so exactly like the person I had supposed you to be."

She lowered her eyes, but she did not seem to take offence. I meant none.

"And you," she answered, "are continually reminding me of an Englishman I knew when I was a girl. He was a very queer person to be attached to the Embassy, — not a courtier, but a serious, literal person like you, Mr. Ritchie, and he resembled you very much. I was very fond of him."

"And — what became of him?" I asked. Other questions rose to my lips, but I put them down.

"I will tell you," she answered, bending forward a little. "He did something which I believe you might have done. A certain Marquis spoke lightly of a lady, an Englishwoman at our court, and my Englishman ran him through one morning at Versailles."

She paused, and I saw that her breath was coming more quickly at the remembrance.

"And then?"

"He fled to England. He was a younger son, and poor. But his King heard of the affair, had it investigated, and restored him to the service. I have never seen him since," she said, "but I have often thought of him. There," she added, after a silence, with a lightness which seemed assumed, "I have given you a romance. How long the Baron takes to dress!"

At that moment there were footsteps in the court-yard, and the orderly appeared at the door, saluting, and speaking in Spanish.

"His Excellency the Governor!"

We rose, and Madame was courtesying and I was bowing to the little man. He was in uniform, his face perspiring in the creases, his plump calves stretching his white stockings to the full. Madame extended her hand and he kissed it, albeit he did not bend easily. He spoke in French, and his voice betrayed the fact that his temper was near slipping its leash. The Baron was a native of Flanders.

"To what happy circumstance do I owe the honor of this visit, Madame la Vicomtesse?" he asked.

"To a woman's whim, Monsieur le Baron," she answered, "for a man would not have dared to disturb you. May I present to your Excellency, Mr. David Ritchie of Kentucky?"

His Excellency bowed stiffly, looked at me with no pretence of pleasure, and I had had sufficient dealings with men to divine that, in the coming conversation, the overflow of his temper would be poured upon me. His first sensation was surprise.

"An American!" he said, in a tone that implied reproach to Madame la Vicomtesse for having fallen into such company. "Ah," he cried, breathing hard in the manner of stout people, "I remember you came down with Monsieur Vigo, Monsieur, did you not?"

It was my turn to be surprised. If the Baron took a like cognizance of all my countrymen who came to New Orleans, he was a busy man indeed.

"Yes, your Excellency," I answered.

"And you are a Federalist?" he said, though petulantly.

"I am, your Excellency."

"Is your nation to overrun the earth?" said the Baron. "Every morning when I ride through the streets it seems to me that more Americans have come. *Pardieu*, I declare every day that, if it were not for the Americans, I should have ten years more of life ahead of me." I could not resist the temptation to glance at Madame la Vicomtesse. Her eyes, half closed, betrayed an amusement that was scarce repressed.

"Come, Monsieur le Baron," she said, "you and I have like beliefs upon most matters. We have both suffered at the hands of people who have mistaken a fiend for a Lady."

"You would have me believe, Madame," the Baron put in, with a wit I had not thought in him, "that Mr. Ritchie knows a lady when he sees one. I can readily believe it."

Madame laughed.

"He at least has a negative knowledge," she replied. "And he has brought into New Orleans no coins, boxes, or clocks against your Excellency's orders with the image and superscription of the Goddess in whose name all things are done. He has not sung 'Ça Ira' at the theatres, and he detests the tricolored cockades as much as you do."

The Baron laughed in spite of himself, and began to thaw. There was a little more friendliness in his next glance at me.

"What images have you brought in, Mr. Ritchie?" he asked. "We all worship the sex in some form, however misplaced our notions of it."

There is not the least doubt that, for the sake of the Vicomtesse, he was trying to be genial, and that his remark was a purely random one. But the roots of my hair seemed to have taken fire. I saw the Baron as in a glass, darkly. But I kept my head, principally because the situation had elements of danger.

"The image of Madame la Vicomtesse, Monsieur," I said.

"*Dame!*" exclaimed his Excellency, eying me with a new interest, "I did not suspect you of being a courtier."

"No more he is, Monsieur le Baron," said the Vicomtesse, "for he speaks the truth."

His Excellency looked blank. As for me, I held my breath, wondering what *coup* Madame was meditating.

"Mr. Ritchie brought down from Kentucky a miniature of me by Boze, that was painted in a costume I once wore at Chantilly."

"*Comment! diable*," exclaimed the Baron. "And how did such a thing get into Kentucky, Madame?"

"You have brought me to the point," she replied, "which is no small triumph for your Excellency. Mr. Ritchie bought the miniature from that most estimable of my relations, Monsieur Auguste de St. Gré."

The Baron sat down and began to fan himself. He even grew a little purple. He looked at Madame, sputtered, and I began to think that, if he didn't relieve himself, his head might blow off. As for the Vicomtesse, she wore an ingenuous air of detachment, and seemed supremely unconscious of the volcano by her side.

"So, Madame," cried the Governor at length, after I know not what repressions, "you have come here in behalf of that — of Auguste de St. Gré!"

"So far as I am concerned, Monsieur," answered the Vicomtesse, calmly, "you may hang Auguste, put him in prison, drown him, or do anything you like with him."

"God help me," said the poor man, searching for his handkerchief, and utterly confounded, "why is it you have come to me, then? Why did you wake me up?" he added, so far forgetting himself.

"I came in behalf of the gentleman who had the indis-

cretion to accompany Auguste to Louisiana," she continued, "in behalf of Mr. Nicholas Temple, who is a cousin of Mr. Ritchie."

The Baron started abruptly from his chair.

"I have heard of him," he cried; "Madame knows where he is?"

"I know where he is. It is that which I came to tell your Excellency."

"*Hein!*" said his Excellency, again nonplussed. "You came to tell me where he is? And where the — the other one is?"

"*Parfaitement*," said Madame. "But before I tell you where they are, I wish to tell you something about Mr. Temple."

"Madame, I know something of him already," said the Baron, impatiently.

"Ah," said she, "from Gignoux. And what do you hear from Gignoux?"

This was another shock, under which the Baron fairly staggered.

"*Diable!* is Madame la Vicomtesse in the plot?" he cried. "What does Madame know of Gignoux?"

Madame's manner suddenly froze.

"I am likely to be in the plot, Monsieur," she said. "I am likely to be in a plot which has for its furtherance that abominable anarchy which deprived me of my home and estates, of my relatives and friends and my sovereign."

"A thousand pardons, Madame la Vicomtesse," said the Baron, more at sea than ever. "I have had much to do these last years, and the heat and the Republicans have got on my temper. Will Madame la Vicomtesse pray explain?"

"I was about to do so when your Excellency interrupted," said Madame. "You see before you Mr. Ritchie, barrister, of Louisville, Kentucky, whose character of sobriety, dependence, and ability" (there was a little gleam in her eye as she gave me this array of virtues) "can be perfectly established. When he came to New Orleans some years ago he brought letters to Monsieur de

St. Gré from Monsieur Gratiot and Colonel Chouteau of St. Louis, and he is known to Mr. Clark and to Monsieur Vigo. He is a Federalist, as you know, and has no sympathy with the Jacobins."

"*Eh bien*, Mr. Ritchie," said the Baron, getting his breath, "you are fortunate in your advocate. Madame la Vicomtesse neglected to say that she was your friend, the greatest of all recommendations in my eyes."

"You are delightful, Monsieur le Baron," said the Vicomtesse.

"Perhaps Mr. Ritchie can tell me something of this expedition," said the Baron, his eyes growing smaller as he looked at me.

"Willingly," I answered. "Although I know that your Excellency is well informed, and that Monsieur Vigo has doubtless given you many of the details that I know."

He interrupted me with a grunt.

"You Americans are clever people, Monsieur," he said; "you contrive to combine shrewdness with frankness."

"If I had anything to hide from your Excellency, I should not be here," I answered. "The expedition, as you know, has been as much of a farce as Citizen Genêt's commissions. But it has been a sad farce to me, inasmuch as it involves the honor of my old friend and Colonel, General Clark, and the safety of my cousin, Mr. Temple."

"So you were with Clark in Illinois?" said the Baron, craftily. "Pardon me, Mr. Ritchie, but I should have said that you are too young."

"Monsieur Vigo will tell you that I was the drummer boy of the regiment, and a sort of ward of the Colonel's. I used to clean his guns and cook his food."

"And you did not see fit to follow your Colonel to Louisiana?" said his Excellency, for he had been trained in a service of suspicion.

"General Clark is not what he was," I replied, chafing a little at his manner; "your Excellency knows that, and I put loyalty to my government before friendship. And I might remind your Excellency that I am neither an adventurer nor a fool."

The little Baron surprised me by laughing. His irritability and his good nature ran in streaks.

"There is no occasion to, Mr. Ritchie," he answered. "I have seen something of men in my time. In which category do you place your cousin, Mr. Temple?"

"If a love of travel and excitement and danger constitutes an adventurer, Mr. Temple is such," I said. "Fortunately the main spur of the adventurer's character is lacking in his case. I refer to the desire for money. Mr. Temple has an annuity from his father's estate in Charleston which puts him beyond the pale of the fortune-seeker, and I firmly believe that if your Excellency sees fit to allow him to leave the province, and if certain disquieting elements can be removed from his life" (I glanced at the Vicomtesse), "he will settle down and become a useful citizen of the United States. As much as I dislike to submit to a stranger private details in the life of a member of my family, I feel that I must tell your Excellency something of Mr. Temple's career, in order that you may know that restlessness and the thirst for adventure were the only motives that led him into this foolish undertaking."

"Pray proceed, Mr. Ritchie," said the Baron.

I was surprised not to find him more restless, and in addition the glance of approbation which the Vicomtesse gave me spurred me on. However distasteful, I had the sense to see that I must hold nothing back of which his Excellency might at any time become cognizant, and therefore I told him as briefly as possible Nick's story, leaving out only the episode with Antoinette. When I came to the relation of the affairs which occurred at Les Îles five years before and told his Excellency that Mrs. Temple had since been living in the Rue Bourbon as Mrs. Clive, unknown to her son, the Baron broke in upon me.

"So the mystery of that woman is cleared at last," he said, and turned to the Vicomtesse. "I have learned that you have been a frequent visitor, Madame."

"Not a sparrow falls to the ground in Louisiana that your Excellency does not hear of it," she answered.

"And Gignoux?" he said, speaking to me again.

"As I told you, Monsieur le Baron," I answered, "I have come to New Orleans at a personal sacrifice to induce my cousin to abandon this matter, and I went out last evening to try to get word of him." This was not strictly true. "I saw Monsieur Gignoux in conference with some of your officers who came out of this hotel."

"You have sharp eyes, Monsieur," he remarked.

"I suspected the man when I met him in Kentucky," I continued, not heeding this. "Monsieur Vigo himself distrusted him. To say that Gignoux were deep in the councils of the expedition, that he held a commission from Citizen Genêt, I realize will have no weight with your Excellency, — provided the man is in the secret service of his Majesty the King of Spain."

"Mr. Ritchie," said the Baron, "you are a young man and I an old one. If I tell you that I have a great respect for your astuteness and ability, do not put it down to flattery. I wish that your countrymen, who are coming down the river like driftwood, more resembled you. As for Citizen Gignoux," he went on, smiling, and wiping his face, "let not your heart be troubled. His Majesty's minister at Philadelphia has written me letters on the subject. I am contemplating for Monsieur Gignoux a sea voyage to Havana, and he is at present partaking of my hospitality in the *calabozo*."

"In the *calabozo!*" I cried, overwhelmed at this example of Spanish justice and omniscience.

"Precisely," said the Baron, drumming with his fingers on his fat knee. "And now," he added, "perhaps Madame la Vicomtesse is ready to tell me of the whereabouts of Mr. Temple and her estimable cousin, Auguste. It may interest her to know why I have allowed them their liberty so long."

"A point on which I have been consumed with curiosity — since I have begun to tremble at the amazing thoroughness of your Excellency's system," said the Vicomtesse.

His Excellency scarcely looked the tyrant as he sat before us, with his calves crossed and his hands folded on his waistcoat and his little black eyes twinkling.

"It is because," he said, "there are many French planters in the province bitten with the three horrors" (he meant Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity), "I sent six to Havana; and if Monsieur Étienne de Boré had not, in the nick of time for him, discovered how to make sugar he would have gone, too. I had an idea that the Sieur de St. Gré and Mr. Temple might act as a bait to reveal the disease in some others. Ha, I am cleverer than you thought, Mr. Ritchie. You are surprised?"

I was surprised, and showed it.

"Come," he said, "you are astute. Why did you think I left them at liberty?"

"I thought your Excellency believed them to be harmless, as they are," I replied.

He turned again to the Vicomtesse. "You have picked up a diplomat, Madame. I must confess that I misjudged him when you introduced him to me. And again, where are Mr. Temple and your estimable cousin? Shall I tell you? They are at old Lamarque's, on the plantation of Philippe de St. Gré."

"They were, your Excellency," said the Vicomtesse.

"Eh?" exclaimed the Baron, jumping.

"Mademoiselle de St. Gré has given her brother eight hundred livres, and he is probably by this time on board a French ship at the English Turn. He is very badly frightened. I will give your Excellency one more surprise."

"Madame la Vicomtesse," said the Baron, "I have heard that, but for your coolness and adroitness, Monsieur le Vicomte, your husband, and several other noblemen and their ladies and some of her Majesty's letters and jewels would never have gotten out of France. I take this opportunity of saying that I have the greatest respect for your intelligence. Now what is the surprise?"

"That your Excellency intended that both Mr. Temple and Auguste de St. Gré were to escape on that ship."

"*Mille tonneres*," exclaimed the Baron, staring at her, and straightway he fell into a fit of laughter that left him coughing and choking and perspiring as only a man in his

condition of flesh can perspire. To say that I was bewildered by this last evidence of the insight of the woman beside me would be to put it mildly. The Vicomtesse sat quietly watching him, the wonted look of repressed laughter on her face, and by degrees his Excellency grew calm again.

"*Mon Dieu*," said he, "I always like to cross swords with you, Madame la Vicomtesse, yet this encounter has been more pleasurable than any I have had since I came to Louisiana. But, *diable*," he cried, "just as I was congratulating myself that I was to have one American the less, you come and tell me that he has refused to flee. Out of consideration for the character and services of Monsieur Philippe de St. Gré I was willing to let them both escape. But now?"

"Mr. Temple is not known in New Orleans except to the St. Gré family," said the Vicomtesse. "He is a man of honor. Suppose Mr. Ritchie were to bring him to your Excellency, and he were to give you his word that he would leave the province at the first opportunity? He now wishes to see his mother before she dies, and it was as much as we could do this morning to persuade him from going to her openly in the face of arrest."

But the Baron was old in a service which did not do things hastily.

"He is well enough where he is for to-day," said his Excellency, resuming his official manner. "To-night after dark I will send down an officer and have him brought before me. He will not then be seen in custody by any one, and provided I am satisfied with him he may go to the Rue Bourbon."

The little Baron rose and bowed to the Vicomtesse to signify that the audience was ended, and he added, as he kissed her hand, "Madame la Vicomtesse, it is a pleasure to be able to serve such a woman as you."

CHAPTER X

THE SCOURGE

As we went through the court I felt as though I had been tied to a string, suspended in the air, and spun. This was undoubtedly due to the heat. And after the astonishing conversation from which we had come, my admiration for the lady beside me was magnified to a veritable awe. We reached the archway. Madame la Vicomtesse held me lightly by the edge of my coat, and I stood looking down at her.

"Wait a minute, Mr. Ritchie," she said, glancing at the few figures hurrying across the Place d'Armes; "those are only Americans, and they are too busy to see us standing here. What do you propose to do now?"

"We must get word to Nick as we promised, that he may know what to expect," I replied. "Suppose we go to Monsieur de St. Gré's house and write him a letter?"

"No," said the Vicomtesse, with decision, "I am going to Mrs. Temple's. I shall write the letter from there and send it by André, and you will go direct to Madame Gravois's."

Her glance rested anxiously upon my face, and there came an expression in her eyes which disturbed me strangely. I had not known it since the days when Polly Ann used to mother me. But I did not mean to give up.

"I am not tired, Madame la Vicomtesse," I answered, "and I will go with you to Mrs. Temple's."

"Give me your hand," she said, and smiled. "André and my maid are used to my vagaries, and your own countrymen will not mind. Give me your hand, Mr. Ritchie."

I gave it willingly enough, with a thrill as she took it

between her own. The same anxious look was in her eyes, and not the least embarrassment.

"There, it is hot and dry, as I feared," she said, "and you seem flushed." She dropped my hand, and there was a touch of irritation in her voice as she continued: "You seemed fairly sensible when I first met you last night, Mr. Ritchie. Are you losing your sanity? Do you not realize that you cannot take liberties with this climate? Do as I say, and go to Madame Gravois's at once."

"It is my pleasure to obey you, Madame la Vicomtesse," I answered, "but I mean to go with you as far as Mrs. Temple's, to see how she fares. She may be — worse."

"That is no reason why you should kill yourself," said Madame, coldly. "Will you not do as I say?"

"I think that I should go to Mrs. Temple's," I answered.

She did not reply to that, letting down her veil impatiently, with a deftness that characterized all her movements. Without so much as asking me to come after her, she reached the banquette, and I walked by her side through the streets, silent and troubled by her displeasure. My pride forbade me to do as she wished. It was the hottest part of a burning day, and the dome of the sky was like a brazen bell above us. We passed the *calabozo* with its iron gates and tiny grilled windows pierced in the massive walls, behind which Gignoux languished, and I could not repress a smile as I thought of him. Even the Spaniards sometimes happened upon justice. In the Rue Bourbon the little shops were empty, the doorstep where my merry fiddler had played vacant, and the very air seemed to simmer above the honeycombed tiles. I knocked at the door, once, twice. There was no answer. I looked at Madame la Vicomtesse, and knocked again so loudly that the little tailor across the street, his shirt opened at the neck, flung out his shutter. Suddenly there was a noise within, the door was opened, and Lindy stood before us, in the darkened room, with terror in her eyes.

"Oh, Marse Dave," she cried, as we entered, "oh, Madame, I'se so glad you'se come, I'se so glad you'se come."

She burst into a flood of tears. And Madame la Vicomtesse, raising her veil, seized the girl by the arm.

"What is it?" she said. "What is the matter, Lindy?"

Madame's touch seemed to steady her.

"Miss Sally," she moaned, "Miss Sally done got de yaller fever."

There was a moment's silence, for we were both too appalled by the news to speak.

"Lindy, are you sure?" said the Vicomtesse.

"Yass'm, yass'm," Lindy sobbed, "I reckon I'se done seed 'nuf of it, Mistis." And she went into a hysterical fit of weeping.

The Vicomtesse turned to her own frightened servants in the doorway, bade André in French to run for Dr. Perrin, and herself closed the battened doors. There was a moment when her face as I saw it was graven on my memory, reflecting a knowledge of the evils of this world, a spirit above and untouched by them, a power to accept what life may bring with no outward sign of pleasure or dismay. Doubtless thus she had made King and Cardinal laugh, doubtless thus, ministering to those who crossed her path, she had met her own calamities. Strangest of all was the effect she had upon Lindy, for the girl ceased crying as she watched her.

Madame la Vicomtesse turned to me.

"You must go at once," she said. "When you get to Madame Gravois's, write to Mr. Temple. I will send André to you there."

She started for the bedroom door, Lindy making way for her. I scarcely knew what I did as I sprang forward and took the Vicomtesse by the arm.

"Where are you going?" I cried. "You cannot go in there! You cannot go in there!"

It did not seem strange that she turned to me without anger, that she did not seek to release her arm. It did not seem strange that her look had in it a gentleness as she spoke.

"I must," she said.

"I cannot let you risk your life," I cried, wholly forgetting myself; "there are others who will do this."

"Others?" she said.

"I will go. I — I have nursed people before this. And there is Lindy."

A smile quivered on her lips, — or was it a smile?

"You will do as I say and go to Madame Gravois's — at once," she murmured, striving for the first time to free herself.

"If you stay, I stay," I answered; "and if you die, I die."

She looked up into my eyes for a fleeting instant.

"Write to Mr. Temple," she said.

Dazed, I watched her open the bedroom doors, motion to Lindy to pass through, and then she had closed them again and I was alone in the darkened parlor.

The throbbing in my head was gone, and a great clearness had come with a great fear. I stood, I know not how long, listening to the groans that came through the wall, for Mrs. Temple was in agony. At intervals I heard Hélène's voice, and then the groans seemed to stop. Ten times I went to the bedroom door, and as many times drew away again, my heart leaping within me at the peril which she faced. If I had had the right, I believe I would have carried her away by force.

But I had not the right. I sat down heavily, by the table, to think, and it might have been a cry of agony sharper than the rest that reminded me once more of the tragedy of the poor lady in torture. My eye fell upon the table, and there, as though prepared for what I was to do, lay pen and paper, ink and sand. My hand shook as I took the quill and tried to compose a letter to my cousin. I scarcely saw the words which I put on the sheet, and I may be forgiven for the unwisdom of that which I wrote.

"*The Baron de Carondelet will send an officer for you to-night so that you may escape observation in custody. His Excellency knew of your hiding-place, but is inclined to be lenient, will allow you to-morrow to go to the Rue Bourbon, and will without doubt permit you to leave the province. Your*

mother is ill, and Madame la Vicomtesse and myself are with her.

"*DAVID.*"

In the state I was it took me a long time to compose this much, and I had barely finished it when there was a knock at the outer door. There was André. He had the immobility of face which sometimes goes with the mulatto, and always with the trained servant, as he informed me that Monsieur le Médecin was not at home, but that he had left word. There was an epidemic, Monsieur, so André feared. I gave him the note and his directions, and ten minutes after he had gone I would have given much to have called him back. How about Antoinette, alone at Les Îles? Why had I not thought of her? We had told her nothing that morning, Madame la Vicomtesse and I, after our conference with Nick. For the girl had shut herself in her room, and Madame had thought it best not to disturb her at such a stage. But would she not be alarmed when Hélène failed to return that night? Had circumstances been different, I myself would have ridden to Les Îles, but no inducement now could make me desert the post I had chosen. After many years I dislike to recall to memory that long afternoon which I spent, helpless, in the Rue Bourbon. Now I was on my feet, pacing restlessly the short breadth of the room, trying to shut out from my mind the horrors of which my ears gave testimony. Again, in the intervals of quiet, I sat with my elbows on the table and my head in my hands, striving to allay the throbbing in my temples. Pains came and went, and at times I felt like a fagot flung into the fire, — I, who had never known a sick day. At times my throat pained me, an odd symptom in a warm climate. Troubled as I was in mind and body, the thought of Hélène's quiet heroism upheld me through it all. More than once I had my hand raised to knock at the bedroom door and ask if I could help, but I dared not; at length, the sun having done its worst and spent its fury, I began to hear steps along the banquette and voices almost at my elbow beyond the little window. At every noise I peered out, hoping for the doctor. But he did not come.

And then, as I fell back into the fauteuil, there was borne on my consciousness a sound I had heard before. It was the music of the fiddler, it was a tune I knew, and the voices of the children were singing the refrain: —

"Ne sait quand reviendra,
Ne sait quand reviendra."

I rose, opened the door, and slipped out of it, and I must have made a strange, hatless figure as I came upon the fiddler and his children from across the street.

"Stop that noise," I cried in French, angered beyond all reason at the thought of music at such a time. "Idiots, there is yellow fever there."

The little man stopped with his bow raised; for a moment they all stared at me, transfixed. It was a little elf in blue *indienne* who jumped first and ran down the street, crying the news in a shrill voice, the others following, the fiddler gazing stupidly after them. Suddenly he scrambled up, moaning, as if the scourge itself had fastened on him, backed into the house, and slammed the door in my face. I returned with slow steps to shut myself in the darkened room again, and I recall feeling something of triumph over the consternation I had caused. No sounds came from the bedroom, and after that the street was quiet as death save for an occasional frightened, hurrying footfall. I was tired.

All at once the bedroom door opened softly, and Hélène was standing there, looking at me. At first I saw her dimly, as in a vision, then clearly. I leaped to my feet and went and stood beside her.

"The doctor has not come," I said. "Where does he live? I will go for him."

She shook her head.

"He can do no good. Lindy has procured all the remedies, such as they are. They can only serve to alleviate," she answered. "She cannot withstand this, poor lady." There were tears on Hélène's lashes. "Her sufferings have been frightful — frightful."

"Cannot I help?" I said thickly. "Cannot I do something?"

She shook her head. She raised her hand timidly to the lapel of my coat, and suddenly I felt her palm, cool and firm, upon my forehead. It rested there but an instant.

"You ought not to be here," she said, her voice vibrant with earnestness and concern. "You ought not to be here. Will you not go — if I ask it?"

"I cannot," I said; "you know I cannot if you stay."

She did not answer that. Our eyes met, and in that instant for me there was neither joy nor sorrow, sickness nor death, nor time nor space nor universe. It was she who turned away.

"Have you written him?" she asked in a low voice.

"Yes," I answered.

"She would not have known him," said Hélène; "after all these years of waiting she would not have known him. Her punishment has been great."

A sound came from the bedroom, and Hélène was gone, silently, as she had come.

* * * * * * *

I must have been dozing in the fauteuil, for suddenly I found myself sitting up, listening to an unwonted noise. I knew from the count of the hoof-beats which came from down the street that a horse was galloping in long strides — a spent horse, for the timing was irregular. Then he was pulled up into a trot, then to a walk as I ran to the door and opened it and beheld Nicholas Temple flinging himself from a pony white with lather. And he was alone! He caught sight of me as soon as his foot touched the banquette.

"What are you doing here?" I cried. "What are you doing here?"

He halted on the edge of the banquette as a hurrying man runs into a wall. He had been all excitement, all fury, as he jumped from his horse; and now, as he looked at me, he seemed to lose his bearings, to be all bewilderment. He cried out my name and stood looking at me like a fool.

"What the devil do you mean by coming here?" I

cried. "Did I not write you to stay where you were? How did you get here?" I stepped down on the banquette and seized him by the shoulders. "Did you receive my letter?"

"Yes," he said, "yes." For a moment that was as far as he got, and he glanced down the street and then at the heaving beast he had ridden, which stood with head drooping to the kennel. Then he laid hold of me. "Davy, is it true that she has yellow fever? Is it true?"

"Who told you?" I demanded angrily.

"André," he answered. "André said that the lady here had yellow fever. Is it true?"

"Yes," I said almost inaudibly.

He let his hand fall from my shoulder, and he shivered.

"May God forgive me for what I have done!" he said. "Where is she?"

"For what you have done?" I cried; "you have done an insensate thing to come here." Suddenly I remembered the sentry at the gate of Fort St. Charles. "How did you get into the city?" I said; "were you mad to defy the Baron and his police?"

"Damn the Baron and his police," he answered, striving to pass me. "Let me in! Let me see her."

Even as he spoke I caught sight of men coming into the street, perhaps at the corner of the Rue St. Pierre, and then more men, and as we went into the house I saw that they were running. I closed the doors. There were cries in the street now, but he did not seem to heed them. He stood listening, heart-stricken, to the sounds that came through the bedroom wall, and a spasm crossed his face. Then he turned like a man not to be denied, to the bedroom door. I was before him, but Madame la Vicomtesse opened it. And I remember feeling astonishment that she did not show surprise or alarm.

"What are you doing here, Mr. Temple?" she said.

"My mother, Madame! My mother! I must go to her."

He pushed past her into the bedroom, and I followed perforce. I shall never forget the scene, though I had but the one glimpse of it, — the raving, yellowed woman

in the bed, not a spectre nor yet even a semblance of the beauty of Temple Bow. But she was his mother, upon whom God had brought such a retribution as He alone can bestow. Lindy, faithful servant to the end, held the wasted hands of her mistress against the violence they would have done. Lindy held them, her own body rocking with grief, her lips murmuring endearments, prayers, supplications.

"Miss Sally, honey, doan you know Lindy? Gawd 'll let you git well, Miss Sally, Gawd 'll let you git well, honey, ter see Marse Nick — ter see — Marse — Nick — "

The words died on Lindy's lips, the ravings of the frenzied woman ceased. The yellowed hands fell limply to the sheet, the shrunken form stiffened. The eyes of the mother looked upon the son, and in them at first was the terror of one who sees the infinite. Then they softened until they became again the only feature that was left of Sarah Temple. Now, as she looked at him who was her pride, her honor, for one sight of whom she had prayed, — ay, and even blasphemed, — her eyes were all tenderness. Then she spoke.

"Harry," she said softly, "be good to me, dear. You are all I have now."

She spoke of Harry Riddle!

But the long years of penance had not been in vain. Nick had forgiven her. We saw him kneeling at the bedside, we saw him with her hand in his, and Hélène was drawing me gently out of the room and closing the door behind her. She did not look at me, nor I at her.

We stood for a moment close together, and suddenly the cries in the street brought us back from the drama in the low-ceiled, reeking room we had left.

"*Ici! Ici! Voici le cheval!*"

There was a loud rapping at the outer door, and a voice demanding admittance in Spanish in the name of his Excellency the Governor.

"Open it," said Hélène. There was neither excitement in her voice, nor yet resignation. In those two words was told the philosophy of her life.

I opened the door. There, on the step, was an officer, perspiring, uniformed and plumed, and behind him a crowd of eager faces, white and black, that seemed to fill the street. He took a step into the room, his hand on the hilt of his sword, and poured out at me a torrent of Spanish of which I understood nothing. All at once his eye fell upon Hélène, who was standing behind me, and he stopped in the middle of his speech and pulled off his hat and bowed profoundly.

"Madame la Vicomtesse!" he stammered. I was no little surprised that she should be so well known.

"You will please to speak French, Monsieur," she said; "this gentleman does not understand Spanish. What is it you desire?"

"A thousand pardons, Madame la Vicomtesse," he said. "I am the Alcalde de Barrio, and a wild Americano has passed the sentry at St. Charles's gate without heeding his Excellency's authority and command. I saw the man with my own eyes. I should know him again in a hundred. We have traced him here to this house, Madame la Vicomtesse. Behold the horse which he rode!" The Alcalde turned and pointed at the beast. "Behold the horse which he rode, Madame la Vicomtesse. The animal will die."

"Probably," answered the Vicomtesse, in an even tone.

"But the man," cried the Alcalde, "the man is here, Madame la Vicomtesse, here, in this house!"

"Yes," she said, "he is here."

"*Sancta Maria!* Madame," he exclaimed, "I — I who speak to you have come to get him. He has defied his Excellency's commands. Where is he?"

"He is in that room," said the Vicomtesse, pointing at the bedroom door.

The Alcalde took a step forward. She stopped him by a quick gesture.

"He is in that room with his mother," she said, "and his mother has the yellow fever. Come, we will go to him." And she put her hand upon the door.

"Yellow fever!" cried the Alcalde, and his voice was

thick with terror. There was a moment's silence as he stood rooted to the floor. I did not wonder then, but I have since thought it remarkable that the words spoken low by both of them should have been caught up on the banquette and passed into the street. Impassive, I heard it echoed from a score of throats, I saw men and women stampeding like frightened sheep, I heard their footfalls and their cries as they ran. A tawdry constable, who held with a trembling hand the bridle of the tired horse, alone remained.

"Yellow fever!" the Alcalde repeated.

The Vicomtesse inclined her head.

He was silent again for a while, uncertain, and then, without comprehending, I saw the man's eyes grow smaller and a smile play about his mouth. He looked at the Vicomtesse with a new admiration to which she paid no heed.

"I am sorry, Madame la Vicomtesse," he began, "but —"

"But you do not believe that I speak the truth," she replied quietly.

He winced.

"Will you follow me?" she said, turning again.

He had started, plainly in an agony of fear, when a sound came from beyond the wall that brought a cry to his lips.

Her manner changed to one of stinging scorn.

"You are a coward," she said. "I will bring the gentleman to you if he can be got to leave the bedside."

"No," said the Alcalde, "no. I — I will go to him, Madame la Vicomtesse."

But she did not open the door.

"Listen," she said in a tone of authority, "I myself have been to his Excellency to-day concerning this gentleman —"

"You, Madame la Vicomtesse?"

"I will open the door," she continued, impatient at the interruption, "and you will see him. Then I shall write a letter which you will take to the Governor. The gentle-

man will not try to escape, for his mother is dying. Besides, he could not get out of the city. You may leave your constable where he is, or the man may come in and stand at this door in sight of the gentleman while you are gone — if he pleases."

"And then?" said the Alcalde.

"It is my belief that his Excellency will allow the gentleman to remain here, and that you will be relieved from the necessity of running any further risk."

As she spoke she opened the door, softly. The room was still now, still as death, and the Alcalde went forward on tiptoe. I saw him peering in, I saw him backing away again like a man in mortal fear.

"Yes, it is he — it is the man," he stammered. He put his hand to his brow.

The Vicomtesse closed the door, and without a glance at him went quickly to the table and began to write. She had no thought of consulting the man again, of asking his permission. Although she wrote rapidly, five minutes must have gone by before the note was finished and folded and sealed. She held it out to him.

"Take this to his Excellency," she said, "and bring me his answer." The Alcalde bowed, murmured her title, and went lamely out of the house. He was plainly in an agony of uncertainty as to his duty, but he glanced at the Vicomtesse — and went, flipping the note nervously with his finger nail. He paused for a few low-spoken words with the tawdry constable, who sat down on the banquette after his chief had gone, still clinging to the bridle. The Vicomtesse went to the doorway, looked at him, and closed the battened doors. The constable did not protest. The day was fading without, and the room was almost in darkness as she crossed over to the little mantel and stood with her head laid upon her arm.

I did not disturb her. The minutes passed, the light waned until I could see her no longer, and yet I knew that she had not moved. The strange sympathy between us kept me silent until I heard her voice calling my name.

"Yes," I answered.

"The candle!"

I drew out my tinder-box and lighted the wick. She had turned, and was facing me even as she had faced me the night before. The night before! The greatest part of my life seemed to have passed since then. I remember wondering that she did not look tired. Her face was sad; her voice was sad, and it had an ineffable, sweet quality at such times that was all its own.

"The Alcalde should be coming back," she said.

"Yes," I answered.

These were our words, yet we scarce heeded their meaning. Between us was drawn a subtler communion than speech, and we dared — neither of us — to risk speech. She searched my face, but her lips were closed. She did not take my hand again as in the afternoon. She turned away. I knew what she would have said.

There was a knock at the door. We went together to open it, and the Alcalde stood on the step. He held in his hand a long letter on which the red seal caught the light, and he gave the letter to the Vicomtesse, with a bow.

"From his Excellency, Madame la Vicomtesse."

She broke the seal, went to the table, and read. Then she looked up at me.

"It is the Governor's permit for Mr. Temple to remain in this house. Thank you," she said to the Alcalde; "you may go."

"With my respectful wishes for the continued good health of Madame la Vicomtesse," said the Alcalde.

CHAPTER XI

"IN THE MIDST OF LIFE"

THE Alcalde had stopped on the step with an exclamation at something in the darkness outside, and he backed, bowing, into the room again to make way for some one. A lady, slim, gowned and veiled in black and followed by a negress, swept past him. The lady lifted her veil and stood before us.

"Antoinette!" exclaimed the Vicomtesse, going to her.

The girl did not answer at once. Her suffering seemed to have brought upon her a certain acceptance of misfortune as inevitable. Her face, framed in the black veil, was never more beautiful than on that night.

"What is the Alcalde doing here?" she said.

The officer himself answered the question.

"I am leaving, Mademoiselle," said he. He reached out his hands toward her, appealingly. "Do you not remember me, Mademoiselle? You brought the good sister to see my wife."

"I remember you," said Antoinette.

"Do not stay here, Mademoiselle!" he cried. "There is — there is yellow fever."

"So that is it," said Antoinette, unheeding him and looking at her cousin. "She has yellow fever, then?"

"I beg you to come away, Mademoiselle!" the man entreated.

"Please go," she said to him. He looked at her, and went out silently, closing the doors after him. "Why was he here?" she asked again.

"He came to get Mr. Temple, my dear," said the Vicomtesse. The girl's lips framed his name, but did not speak it.

"Where is he?" she asked slowly.

The Vicomtesse pointed towards the bedroom.

"In there," she answered, "with his mother."

"He came to her?" Antoinette asked quite simply.

The Vicomtesse glanced at me, and drew the veil gently from the girl's shoulders. She led her, unresisting, to a chair. I looked at them. The difference in their ages was not so great. Both had suffered cruelly; one had seen the world, the other had not, and yet the contrast lay not here. Both had followed the gospel of helpfulness to others, but one as a *religieuse*, innocent of the sin around her, though poignant of the sorrow it caused. The other, knowing evil with an insight that went far beyond intuition, fought with that, too.

"I will tell you, Antoinette," began the Vicomtesse; "it was as you said. Mr. Ritchie and I found him at Lamarque's. He had not taken your money; he did not even know that Auguste had gone to see you. He did not even know," she said, bending over the girl, "that he was on your father's plantation. When we told him that, he would have left it at once."

"Yes," she said.

"He did not know that his mother was still in New Orleans. And when we told him how ill she was he would have come to her then. It was as much as we could do to persuade him to wait until we had seen Monsieur de Carondelet. Mr. Ritchie and I came directly to town and saw his Excellency."

It was characteristic of the Vicomtesse that she told this almost with a man's brevity, that she omitted the stress and trouble and pain of it all. These things were done; the tact and skill and character of her who had accomplished them were not spoken of. The girl listened immovable, her lips parted and her eyes far away. Suddenly, with an awakening, she turned to Hélène.

"You did this!" she cried.

"Mr. Ritchie and I together," said the Vicomtesse.

Her next exclamation was an odd one, showing how the mind works at such a time.

"But his Excellency was having his siesta!" said Antoinette.

Again Hélène glanced at me, but I cannot be sure that she smiled.

"We thought the matter of sufficient importance to awake his Excellency," said Hélène.

"And his Excellency?" asked Antoinette. In that moment all three of us seemed to have forgotten the tragedy behind the wall.

"His Excellency thought so, too, when we had explained it sufficiently," Hélène answered.

The girl seemed suddenly to throw off the weight of her grief. She seized the hand of the Vicomtesse in both of her own.

"The Baron pardoned him?" she cried. "Tell me what his Excellency said. Why are you keeping it from me?"

"Hush, my dear," said the Vicomtesse. "Yes, he pardoned him. Mr. Temple was to have come to the city to-night with an officer. Mr. Ritchie and I came to this house together, and we found —"

"Yes, yes," said Antoinette.

"Mr. Ritchie wrote to Mr. Temple that his Excellency was to send for him to-night, but André told him of the fever, and he came here in the face of danger to see her before she died. He galloped past the sentry at the gate, and the Alcalde followed him from there."

"And came here to arrest him?" cried Antoinette. Before the Vicomtesse could prevent her she sprang from her chair, ran to the door, and was peering out into the darkness. "Is the Alcalde waiting?"

"No, no," said the Vicomtesse, gently bringing her back. "I wrote to his Excellency and we have his permission for Mr. Temple to remain here."

Suddenly Antoinette stopped in the middle of the floor, facing the candle, her hands clasped, her eyes wide with fear. We started, Hélène and I, as we looked at her.

"What is it, my dear?" said the Vicomtesse, laying a hand on her arm.

"He will take it," she said, "he will take the fever."

A strange thing happened. Many, many times have I thought of it since, and I did not know its meaning then. I had looked to see the Vicomtesse comfort her. But Hélène took a step towards me, my eyes met hers, and in them reflected was the terror I had seen in Antoinette's. At that instant I, too, forgot the girl, and we turned to see that she had sunk down, weeping, in the chair. Then we both went to her, I through some instinct I did not fathom.

Hélène's hand, resting on Antoinette's shoulder, trembled there. It may well have been my own weakness which made me think her body swayed, which made me reach out as if to catch her. However marvellous her strength and fortitude, these could not last forever. And — Heaven help me — my own were fast failing. Once the room had seemed to me all in darkness. Then I saw the Vicomtesse leaning tenderly over her cousin and whispering in her ear, and Antoinette rising, clinging to her.

"I will go," she faltered, "I will go. He must not know I have been here. You — you will not tell him?"

"No, I shall not tell him," answered the Vicomtesse.

"And — you will send word to me, Hélène?"

"Yes, dear."

Antoinette kissed her, and began to adjust her veil mechanically. I looked on, bewildered by the workings of the feminine mind. Why was she going? The Vicomtesse gave me no hint. But suddenly the girl's arms fell to her sides, and she stood staring, not so much as a cry escaping her. The bedroom doors had been opened, and between them was the tall figure of Nicholas Temple. So they met again after many years, and she who had parted them had brought them together once more. He came a step into the room, as though her eyes had drawn him so far. Even then he did not speak her name.

"Go," he said. "Go, you must not stay here. Go!"

She bowed her head.

"I was going," she answered. "I — I am going."

"But you must go at once," he cried excitedly. "Do you know what is in there?" and he pointed towards the bedroom.

"Yes, yes, I know," she said, "I know."

"Then go," he cried. "As it is you have risked too much."

She lifted up her head and looked at him. There was a new-born note in her voice, a tremulous note of joy in the midst of sorrow. It was of her he was thinking!

"And you?" she said. "You have come and remained."

"She is my mother," he answered. "God knows it was the least I could have done."

Twice she had changed before our eyes, and now we beheld a new and yet more startling transformation. When she spoke there was no reproach in her voice, but triumph. Antoinette undid her veil.

"Yes, she is your mother," she answered; "but for many years she has been my friend. I will go to her. She cannot forbid me now. Hélène has been with her," she said, turning to where the Vicomtesse stood watching her intently. "Hélène has been with her. And shall I, who have longed to see her these many years, leave her now?"

"But you were going!" he cried, beside himself with apprehension at this new turning. "You told me that you were going."

Truly, man is born without perception.

"Yes, I told you that," she replied almost defiantly.

"And why were you going?" he demanded. Then I had a sudden desire to shake him.

Antoinette was mute.

"You yourself must find the answer to that question, Mr. Temple," said the Vicomtesse, quietly.

He turned and stared at Hélène, and she seemed to smile. Then as his eyes went back, irresistibly, to the other, a light that was wonderful to see dawned and grew in them. I shall never forget him as he stood, handsome and fearless, a gentleman still, despite his years of wandering and adventure, and in this supreme moment unselfish. The wilful, masterful boy had become a man at last.

He started forward, stopped, trembling with a shock of remembrance, and gave back again.

"You cannot come," he said; "I cannot let you take this risk. Tell her she cannot come, Madame," he said to Hélène. "For the love of God send her home again."

But there were forces which even Hélène could not stem. He had turned to go back, he had seized the door, but Antoinette was before him. Custom does not weigh at such a time. Had she not read his avowal? She had his hand in hers, heedless of us who watched. At first he sought to free himself, but she clung to it with all the strength of her love, — yet she did not look up at him.

"I will come with you," she said in a low voice, "I will come with you, Nick."

How quaintly she spoke his name, and gently, and timidly — ay, and with a supreme courage. True to him through all those numb years of waiting, this was a little thing — that they should face death together. A little thing, and yet the greatest joy that God can bestow upon a good woman. He looked down at her with a great tenderness, he spoke her name, and I knew that he had taken her at last into his arms.

"Come," he said.

They went in together, and the doors closed behind them.

* * * * * * *

Antoinette's maid was on the step, and the Vicomtesse and I were alone once more in the little parlor. I remember well the sense of unreality I had, and how it troubled me. I remember how what I had seen and heard was turning, turning in my mind. Nick had come back to Antoinette. They were together in that room, and Mrs. Temple was dying — dying. No, it could not be so. Again, I was in the garden at Les Îles on a night that was all perfume, and I saw the flowers all ghostly white under the moon. And then, suddenly, I was watching the green candle sputter, and out of the stillness came a cry — the *sereno* calling the hour of the night. How my head throbbed! It was keeping time to some rhythm, I knew not what. Yes, it was the song my father used to sing: —

"I've faught on land, I've faught at sea,
At hame I've faught my aunty, O!"

But New Orleans was hot, burning hot, and this could not be cold I felt. Ah, I had it, the water was cold going to Vincennes, so cold!

A voice called me. No matter where I had gone, I think I would have come back at the sound of it. I listened intently, that I might lose no word of what it said. I knew the voice. Had it not called to me many times in my life before? But now there was fear in it, and fear gave it a vibrant sweetness, fear gave it a quality that made it mine — mine.

"You are shivering."

That was all it said, and it called from across the sea. And the sea was cold, — cold and green under the gray light. If she who called to me would only come with the warmth of her love! The sea faded, the light fell, and I was in the eternal cold of space between the whirling worlds. If she could but find me! Was not that her hand in mine? Did I not feel her near me, touching me? I wondered that I should hear myself as I answered her.

"I am not ill," I said. "Speak to me again."

She was pressing my hand now, I saw her bending over me, I felt her hair as it brushed my face. She spoke again. There was a tremor in her voice, and to that alone I listened. The words were decisive, of command, and with them some sense as of a haven near came to me. Another voice answered in a strange tongue, saying seemingly: —

"*Oui, Madame — malé couri — bon djé! — malé couri!*"

I heard the doors close, and the sound of footsteps running and dying along the banquette, and after that my shoulders were raised and something wrapped about them. Then stillness again, the stillness that comes between waking and sleeping, between pain and calm. And at times when I felt her hand fall into mine or press against my brow, the pain seemed more endurable. After that I recall being lifted, being borne along. I opened my eyes once and saw, above a tile-crowned wall, the moon all yellow and distorted in the sky. Then a gate clicked, dungeon blackness, half-light again, ascent, oblivion.

CHAPTER XII

VISIONS, AND AN AWAKENING

I HAVE still sharp memories of the tortures of that illness, though it befell so long ago. At times, when my mind was gone from me, I cried out I know not what of jargon, of sentiment, of the horrors I had beheld in my life. I lived again the pleasant scenes, warped and burlesqued almost beyond cognizance, and the tragedies were magnified a hundred fold. Thus it would be: on the low, white ceiling five cracks came together, and that was a device. And the device would take on color, red-bronze like the sumach in the autumn and streaks of vermilion, and two glowing coals that were eyes, and above them eagles' feathers, and the cracks became bramble bushes. I was behind the log, and at times I started and knew that it was a hideous dream, and again Polly Ann was clutching me and praying me to hold back, and I broke from her and splashed over the slippery limestone bed of the creek to fight single-handed. Through all the fearful struggle I heard her calling me piteously to come back to her. When the brute got me under water I could not hear her, but her voice came back suddenly (as when a door opens) and it was like the wind singing in the poplars. Was it Polly Ann's voice?

Again, I sat with Nick under the trees on the lawn at Temple Bow, and the world was dark with the coming storm. I knew and he knew that the storm was brewing that I might be thrust out into it. And then in the blackness, when the air was filled with all the fair things of the earth torn asunder, a beautiful woman came through the noise and the fury, and we ran to her and clung to

her skirts, thinking we had found safety. But she thrust us forth into the blackness with a smile, as though she were flinging papers out of the window. She, too, grew out of the design in the cracks of the ceiling, and a greater fear seized me at sight of her features than when the red face came out of the brambles.

My constant torment was thirst. I was in the prairie, and it was scorched and brown to the horizon. I searched and prayed pitifully for water, — for only a sip of the brown water with the specks in it that was in the swamp. There were no swamps. I was on the bed in the cabin looking at the shifts and hunting shirts on the pegs, and Polly Ann would bring a gourdful of clear water from the spring as far as the door. Nay, once I got it to my lips, and it was gone. Sometimes a young man in a hunting shirt, square-shouldered, clear-eyed, his face tanned and his fair hair bleached by the sun, would bring the water. He was the hero of my boyhood, and part of him indeed was in me. And I would have followed him again to Vincennes despite the tortures of the damned. But when I spoke his name he grew stouter before me, and his eyes lost their lustre and his hair turned gray ; and his hand shook as he held out the gourd and spilled its contents ere I could reach them.

Sometimes another brought the water, and at sight of her I would tremble and grow faint, and I had not the strength to reach for it. She would look at me with eyes that laughed despite the resolution of the mouth. Then the eyes would grow pitiful at my helplessness, and she would murmur my name. There was some reason which I never fathomed why she could not give me the water, and her own suffering seemed greater than mine because of it. So great did it seem that I forgot my own and sought to comfort her. Then she would go away, very slowly, and I would hear her calling to me in the wind, from the stars to which I looked up from the prairie. It was she, I thought, who ordered the world. Who, when women were lost and men cried out in distress, came to them calmly, ministered to them deftly.

Once — perhaps a score of times, I cannot tell — was limned on the ceiling, where the cracks were, her miniature, and I knew what was coming and shuddered and cried aloud because I could not stop it. I saw the narrow street of a strange city deep down between high houses, — houses with gratings on the lowest windows, with studded, evil-looking doors, with upper stories that toppled over to shut out the light of the sky, with slated roofs that slanted and twisted this way and that and dormers peeping from them. Down in the street, instead of the King's white soldiers, was a foul, unkempt rabble, creeping out of its damp places, jesting, cursing, singing. And in the midst of the rabble a lady sat in a cart high above it unmoved. She was the lady of the miniature. A window in one of the jutting houses was flung open, a little man leaned out excitedly, and I knew him too. He was Jean Baptiste Lenoir, and he cried out in a shrill voice: —

"You must take off her ruff, citizens. You must take off her ruff!"

There came a blessed day when my thirst was gone, when I looked up at the cracks in the ceiling and wondered why they did not change into horrors. I watched them a long, long time, and it seemed incredible that they should still remain cracks. Beyond that I would not go, into speculation I dared not venture. They remained cracks, and I went to sleep thanking God. When I awoke a breeze came in cool, fitful gusts, and on it was the scent of flowers. I thought of turning my head, and I remember wondering for a long time over the expediency of this move. What would happen if I did? Perhaps the visions would come back, perhaps my head would come off. Finally I decided to risk it, and the first thing that I beheld was a palm-leaf fan, moving slowly. That fact gave me food for thought, and contented me for a while. Then I hit upon the idea that there must be something behind the fan. I was distinctly pleased by this astuteness, and I spent more time in speculation. Whatever it was, it had a tantalizing elusiveness, keeping the fan between it and me. This was not fair.

I had an inspiration. If I feigned to be asleep, perhaps the thing behind the fan would come out. I shut my eyes. The breeze continued steadily. Surely no human being could fan as long as that without being tired! I opened my eyes twice, but the thing was inscrutable. Then I heard a sound that I knew to be a footstep upon boards. A voice whispered: —

"The delirium has left him."

Another voice, a man's voice, answered: —

"Thank God! Let me fan him. You are tired."

"I am not tired," answered the first voice.

"I do not see how you have stood it," said the man's voice. "You will kill yourself, Madame la Vicomtesse. The danger is past now."

"I hope so, Mr. Temple," said the first voice. "Please go away. You may come back in half an hour."

I heard the footsteps retreating. Then I said: "I am not asleep."

The fan stopped for a brief instant and then went on vibrating inexorably. I was entranced at the thought of what I had done. I had spoken, though indeed it seemed to have had no effect. Could it be that I hadn't spoken? I began to be frightened at this, when gradually something crept into my mind and drove the fear out. I did not grasp what this was at first, it was like the first staining of wine on the eastern sky to one who sees a sunrise. And then the thought grew even as the light grows, tinged by prismatic colors, until at length a memory struck into my soul like a shaft of light. I spoke her name, unblushingly, aloud.

"Hélène!"

The fan stopped. There was a silence that seemed an eternity as the palm leaf trembled in her hand, there was an answer that strove tenderly to command.

"Hush, you must not talk," she said.

Never, I believe, came such supreme happiness with obedience. I felt her hand upon my brow, and the fan moved again. I fell asleep once more from sheer weariness of joy. She was there, beside me. She had been

there, beside me, through it all, and it was her touch which had brought me back to life.

I dreamed of her. When I awoke again her image was in my mind, and I let it rest there in contemplation. But presently I thought of the fan, turned my head, and it was not there. A great fear seized me. I looked out of the open door where the morning sun threw the checkered shadows of the honeysuckle on the floor of the gallery, and over the railing to the tree-tops in the court-yard. The place struck a chord in my memory. Then my eyes wandered back into the room. There was a polished dresser, a crucifix and a *prie-dieu* in the corner, a fauteuil, and another chair at my bed. The floor was rubbed to an immaculate cleanliness, stained yellow, and on it lay clean woven mats. The room was empty!

I cried out, a yellow and red turban shot across the window, and I beheld in the door the spare countenance of the faithful Lindy.

"Marse Dave," she cried, "is you feelin' well, honey?"

"Where am I, Lindy?" I asked.

Lindy, like many of her race, knew well how to assume airs of importance. Lindy had me down, and she knew it.

"Marse Dave," she said, "doan yo' know better'n dat? Yo' know yo' ain't ter talk. Lawsy, I reckon I wouldn't be wuth pizen if she was to hear I let yo' talk."

Lindy implied that there was tyranny somewhere.

"She?" I asked, "who's she?"

"Now yo' hush, Marse Dave," said Lindy, in a shrill whisper, "I ain't er-gwine ter git mixed up in no disputation. Ef she was ter hear me er-disputin' wid yo', Marse Dave, I reckon I'd done git such er tongue-lashin'—" Lindy looked at me suspiciously. "Yo'-er allus was powe'rful cute, Marse Dave."

Lindy set her lips with a mighty resolve to be silent. I heard some one coming along the gallery, and then I saw Nick's tall figure looming up behind her.

"Davy," he cried.

Lindy braced herself up doggedly.

"Yo' ain't er-gwine to git in thar nohow, Marse Nick," she said.

"Nonsense, Lindy," he answered, "I've been in there as much as you have." And he took hold of her thin arm and pulled her back.

"Marse Nick!" she cried, terror-stricken, "she'll done fin' out dat you've been er-talkin'."

"Pish!" said Nick with a fine air, "who's afraid of her?"

Lindy's face took on an expression of intense amusement

"Yo' is, for one, Marse Nick," she answered, with the familiarity of an old servant. "I done seed yo' skedaddle when she comed."

"Tut," said Nick, grandly, "I run from no woman. Eh, Davy?" He pushed past the protesting Lindy into the room and took my hand.

"Egad, you have been near the devil's precipice, my son. A three-bottle man would have gone over." In his eyes was all the strange affection he had had for me ever since we had been boys at Temple Bow together. "Davy, I reckon life wouldn't have been worth much if you'd gone."

I did not answer. I could only stare at him, mutely grateful for such an affection. In all his wild life he had been true to me, and he had clung to me stanchly in this, my greatest peril. Thankful that he was here, I searched his handsome person with my eyes. He was dressed, as usual, with care and fashion, in linen breeches and a light gray coat and a filmy ruffle at his neck. But I thought there had come a change into his face. The reckless quality seemed to have gone out of it, yet the spirit and daring remained, and with these all the sweetness that was once in his smile. There were lines under his eyes that spoke of vigils.

"You have been sitting up with me," I said.

"Of course," he answered, patting my shoulder. "Of course I have. What did you think I would be doing?"

"What was the matter with me?" I asked.

"Nothing much," he said lightly, "a touch of the sun,

and a great deal of overwork in behalf of your friends. Now keep still, or I will be getting peppered."

I was silent for a while, turning over this answer in my mind. Then I said: —

"I had yellow fever."

He started.

"It is no use to lie to you," he replied; "you're too shrewd."

I was silent again for a while.

"Nick," I said, "you had no right to stay here. You have — other responsibilities now."

He laughed. It was the old buoyant, boyish laugh of sheer happiness, and I felt the better for hearing it.

"If you begin to preach, parson, I'll go; I vow I'll have no more sermonizing. Davy," he cried, "isn't she just the dearest, sweetest, most beautiful person in the world?"

I smiled.

"Where is she?" I asked, temporizing. Nick was not a subtle person, and I was ready to follow him at great length in the praise of Antoinette. "I hope she is not here."

"We made her go to Les Îles," said he.

"And you risked your life and stayed here without her?" I said.

"As for risking life, that kind of criticism doesn't come well from you. And as for Antoinette," he added with a smile, "I expect to see something of her later on."

"Well," I answered with a sigh of supreme content, "you have been a fool all your life, and I hope that she will make you sensible."

"You never could make me so," said Nick, "and besides, I don't think you've been so damned sensible yourself."

We were silent again for a space.

"Davy," he asked, "do you remember what I said when you had that miniature here?"

"You said a great many things, I believe."

"I told you to consider carefully the masterful features of that lady, and to thank God you hadn't married her. I vow I never thought she'd turn up. Upon my oath

I never thought I should be such a blind slave as I have been for the last fortnight. Faith, Monsieur de St. Gré is a strong man, but he was no more than a puppet in his own house when he came back here for a day. That lady could govern a province, — no, a kingdom. But I warrant you there would be no climbing of balconies in her dominions. I have never been so generalled in my life."

I had no answer for these comments.

"The deuce of it is the way she does it," he continued, plainly bent on relieving himself. "There's no noise, no fuss; but you must obey, you don't know why. And yet you may flay me if I don't love her."

"Love her!" I repeated.

"She saved your life," said Nick; "I don't believe any other woman could have done it. She hadn't any thought of her own. She has been here, in this room, almost constantly night and day, and she never let you go. The little French doctor gave you up — not she. She held on. Cursed if I see why she did it."

"Nor I," I answered.

"Well," he said apologetically, "of course I would have done it, but you weren't anything to her. Yes, egad, you were something to be saved, — that was all that was necessary. She had you brought back here — we are in Monsieur de St. Gré's house, by the way — in a litter, and she took command as though she had nursed yellow fever cases all her life. No flurry. I said that you were in love with her once, Davy, when I saw you looking at the portrait. I take it back. Of course a man could be very fond of her," he said, "but a king ought to have married her. As for that poor Vicomte she's tied up to, I reckon I know the reason why he didn't come to America. An ordinary man would have no chance at all. God bless her!" he cried, with a sudden burst of feeling, "I would die for her myself. She got me out of a barrel of trouble with his Excellency. She cared for my mother, a lonely outcast, and braved death herself to go to her when she was dying of the fever. God bless her!"

Lindy was standing in the doorway.

"Lan' sakes, Marse Nick, yo' gotter go," she said.

He rose and pressed my fingers. "I'll go," he said, and left me. Lindy seated herself in the chair. She held in her hand a bowl of beef broth. From this she fed me in silence, and when she left she commanded me to sleep, informing me that she would be on the gallery within call.

But I did not sleep at once. Nick's words had brought back a fact which my returning consciousness had hitherto ignored. The birds sang in the court-yard, and when the breeze stirred it was ever laden with a new scent. I had been snatched from the jaws of death, my life was before me, but the happiness which had thrilled me was gone, and in my weakness the weight of the sadness which had come upon me was almost unbearable. If I had had the strength, I would have risen then and there from my bed, I would have fled from the city at the first opportunity. As it was, I lay in a torture of thought, living over again every part of my life which she had touched. I remembered the first long, yearning look I had given the miniature at Madame Bouvet's. I had not loved her then. My feeling rather had been a mysterious sympathy with and admiration for this brilliant lady whose sphere was so far removed from mine. This was sufficiently strange. Again, in the years of my struggle for livelihood which followed, I dreamed of her; I pictured her often in the midst of the darkness of the Revolution. Then I had the miniature again, which had travelled to her, as it were, and come back to me. Even then it was not love I felt, but an unnamed sentiment for one whom I clothed with gifts and attributes I admired: constancy, an ability to suffer and to hide, decision, wit, refuge for the weak, scorn for the false. So I named them at random and cherished them, knowing that these things were not what other men longed for in women. Nay, there was another quality which I believed was there — which I knew was there — a supreme tenderness that was hidden like a treasure too sacred to be seen.

I did not seek to explain the mystery which had brought

her across the sea into that little garden of Mrs. Temple's and into my heart. There she was now enthroned, deified; that she would always be there I accepted. That I would never say or do anything not in consonance with her standards I knew. That I would suffer much I was sure, but the lees of that suffering I should hoard because they came from her.

What might have been I tried to put away. There was the moment, I thought, when our souls had met in the little parlor in the Rue Bourbon. I should never know. This I knew — that we had labored together to bring happiness into other lives.

Then came another thought to appall me. Unmindful of her own safety, she had nursed me back to life through all the horrors of the fever. The doctor had despaired, and I knew that by the very force that was in her she had saved me. She was here now, in this house, and presently she would be coming back to my bedside. Painfully I turned my face to the wall in a torment of humiliation — I had called her by her name. I would see her again, but I knew not whence the strength for that ordeal was to come.

CHAPTER XIII

A MYSTERY

I KNEW by the light that it was evening when I awoke. So prisoners mark the passing of the days by a bar of sunlight. And as I looked at the green trees in the court-yard, vaguely troubled by I knew not what, some one came and stood in the doorway. It was Nick.

"You don't seem very cheerful," said he; "a man ought to be who has been snatched out of the fire."

"You seem to be rather too sure of my future," I said, trying to smile.

"That's more like you," said Nick. "Egad, you ought to be happy — we all ought to be happy — she's gone."

"She!" I cried. "Who's gone?"

"Madame la Vicomtesse," he replied, rubbing his hands as he stood over me. "But she's left instructions with me for Lindy as long as Monsieur de Carondelet's *Bando de Buen Gobierno*. You are not to do this, and you are not to do that, you are to eat such and such things, you are to be made to sleep at such and such times. She came in here about an hour ago and took a long look at you before she left."

"She was not ill?" I said faintly.

"Faith, I don't know why she was not," he said. "She has done enough to tire out an army. But she seems well and fairly happy. She had her joke at my expense as she went through the court-yard, and she reminded me that we were to send a report by André every day."

Chagrin, depression, relief, bewilderment, all were struggling within me.

"Where did she go?" I asked at last.

"To Les Îles," he said. "You are to be brought there as soon as you are strong enough."

"Do you happen to know why she went?" I said.

"Now how the deuce should I know?" he answered. "I've done everything with blind servility since I came into this house. I never asked for any reason — it never would have done any good. I suppose she thought that you were well on the road to recovery, and she knew that Lindy was an old hand. And then the doctor is to come in."

"Why didn't you go?" I demanded, with a sudden remembrance that he was staying away from happiness.

"It was because I longed for another taste of liberty, Davy," he laughed. "You and I will have an old-fashioned time here together, — a deal of talk, and perhaps a little piquet, — who knows?"

My strength came back, bit by bit, and listening to his happiness did much to ease the soreness of my heart — while the light lasted. It was in the night watches that my struggles came — though often some unwitting speech of his would bring back the pain. He took delight in telling me, for example, how for hours at a time I had been in a fearful delirium.

"The Lord knows what foolishness you talked, Davy," said he. "It would have done me good to hear you had you been in your right mind."

"But you did hear me," I said, full of apprehensions.

"Some of it," said he. "You were after Wilkinson once, in a burrow, I believe, and you swore dreadfully because he got out of the other end. I can't remember all the things you said. Oh, yes, once you were talking to Auguste de St. Gré about money."

"Money?" I repeated in a sinking voice.

"Oh, a lot of jargon. The Vicomtesse pushed me out of the room, and after that I was never allowed to be there when you had those flights. Curse the mosquitoes!" He seized a fan and began to ply it vigorously. "I remember. You were giving Auguste a lecture. Then I had to go."

These and other reminiscences gave me sufficient food for reflection, and many a shudder over the possibilities of my ravings. She had put him out! No wonder.

After a while I was carried to the gallery, and there I would talk to the little doctor about the yellow fever which had swept the city. Monsieur Perrin was not much of a doctor, to be sure, and he had a heartier dread of the American invasion than of the scourge. He worshipped the Vicomtesse, and was so devoid of professional pride as to give her freely all credit for my recovery. He, too, clothed her with the qualities of statesmanship.

"Ha, Monsieur," he said, "if that lady had been King of France, do you think there would have been any States General, any red bonnets, any Jacobins or Cordeliers? *Parbleu*, she would have swept the vicemongers and traitors out of the Palais Royal itself. There would have been a house-cleaning there. I, who speak to you, know it."

Every day Nick wrote a bulletin to be sent to the Vicomtesse, and he took a fiendish delight in the composition of these. He would come out on the gallery with ink and a blank sheet of paper and try to enlist my help. He would insert the most ridiculous statements, as for instance, "Davy is worse to-day, having bribed Lindy to give him a pint of Madeira against my orders." Or, "Davy feigns to be sinking rapidly because he wishes to have you back." Indeed, I was always in a torture of doubt to know what the rascal had sent.

His company was most agreeable when he was recounting the many adventures he had had during the five years after he had left New Orleans and been lost to me. These would fill a book, and a most readable book it would be if written in his own speech. His love for the excitement of the frontier had finally drawn him back to the Cumberland country near Nashville, and he had actually gone so far as to raise a house and till some of the land which he had won from Darnley. It was perhaps characteristic of him that he had named the place "Rattle-and-Snap" in honor of the game which had put him in possession of it, and "Rattle-and-Snap" it remains to this day. He was

going back there with Antoinette, so he said, to build a brick mansion and to live a respectable life the rest of his days.

There was one question which had been in my mind to ask him, concerning the attitude of Monsieur de St. Gré. That gentleman, with Madame, had hurried back from Pointe Coupée at a message from the Vicomtesse, and had gone first to Les Îles to see Antoinette. Then he had come, in spite of the fever, to his own house in New Orleans to see Nick himself. What their talk had been I never knew, for the subject was too painful to be dwelt upon, and the conversation had been marked by frankness on both sides. Monsieur de St. Gré was a just man, his love for his daughter was his chief passion, and despite all that had happened he liked Nick. I believe he could not wholly blame the younger man, and he forgave him.

Mrs. Temple, poor lady, had died on that first night of my illness, and it was her punishment that she had not known her son or her son's happiness. Whatever sins she had committed in her wayward life were atoned for, and by her death I firmly believe that she redeemed him. She lies now among the Temples in Charleston, and on the stone which marks her grave is cut no line that hints of the story of these pages.

One bright morning, when Nick and I were playing cards, we heard some one mounting the stairs, and to my surprise and embarrassment I beheld Monsieur de St. Gré emerging on the gallery. He was in white linen and wore a broad hat, which he took from his head as he advanced. He had aged somewhat, his hair was a little gray, but otherwise he was the firm, dignified personage I had admired on this same gallery five years before.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said in English; "ha, do not rise, sir" (to me). He patted Nick's shoulder kindly, but not familiarly, as he passed him, and extended his hand.

"Mr. Ritchie, it gives me more pleasure than I can express to see you so much recovered."

"I am again thrown on your hospitality, sir," I said, flushing with pleasure at this friendliness. For I admired and respected the man greatly. "And I fear I have been a burden and trouble to you and your family."

He took my hand and pressed it. Characteristically, he did not answer this, and I remembered he was always careful not to say anything which might smack of insincerity.

"I had a glimpse of you some weeks ago," he said, thus making light of the risk he had run. "You are a different man now. You may thank your Scotch blood and your strong constitution."

"His good habits have done him some good, after all," put in my irrepressible cousin.

Monsieur de St. Gré smiled.

"Nick," he said (he pronounced the name quaintly, like Antoinette), "his good habits have turned out to be some advantage to you. Mr. Ritchie, you have a faithful friend at least." He patted Nick's shoulder again. "And he has promised me to settle down."

"I have every inducement, sir," said Nick.

Monsieur de St. Gré became grave.

"You have indeed, Monsieur," he answered.

"I have just come from Dr. Perrin's, David," — he added, "May I call you so? Well, then, I have just come from Dr. Perrin's, and he says you may be moved to Les Îles this very afternoon. Why, upon my word," he exclaimed, staring at me, "you don't look pleased. One would think you were going to the *calabozo*."

"Ah," said Nick, slyly, "I know. He has tasted freedom, Monsieur, and Madame la Vicomtesse will be in command again."

I flushed. Nick could be very exasperating.

"You must not mind him, Monsieur," I said.

"I do not mind him," answered Monsieur de St. Gré, laughing in spite of himself. "He is a sad rogue. As for Hélène — "

"I shall not know how to thank the Vicomtesse," I said. "She has done me the greatest service one person can do another."

"Hélène is a good woman," answered Monsieur de St. Gré, simply. "She is more than that, she is a wonderful woman. I remember telling you of her once. I little thought then that she would ever come to us."

He turned to me. "Dr. Perrin will be here this afternoon, David, and he will have you dressed. Between five and six if all goes well, we shall start for Les Îles. And in the meantime, gentlemen," he added with a stateliness that was natural to him, "I have business which takes me to-day to my brother-in-law's, Monsieur de Beauséjour's."

Nick leaned over the gallery and watched meditatively his prospective father-in-law leaving the court-yard.

"He got me out of a devilish bad scrape," he said.

"How was that?" I asked listlessly.

"That fat little Baron, the Governor, was for deporting me for running past the sentry and giving him all the trouble I did. It seems that the Vicomtesse promised to explain matters in a note which she wrote, and never did explain. She was here with you, and a lot she cared about anything else. Lucky that Monsieur de St. Gré came back. Now his Excellency graciously allows me to stay here, if I behave myself, until I get married."

I do not know how I spent the rest of the day. It passed, somehow. If I had had the strength then, I believe I should have fled. I was to see her again, to feel her near me, to hear her voice. During the weeks that had gone by I had schooled myself, in a sense, to the inevitable. I had not let my mind dwell upon my visit to Les Îles, and now I was face to face with the struggle for which I felt I had not the strength. I had fought one battle, — I knew that a fiercer battle was to come.

In due time the doctor arrived, and while he prepared me for my departure, the little man sought, with misplaced kindness, to raise my spirits. Was not Monsieur going to the country, to a paradise? Monsieur — so Dr. Perrin had noticed — had a turn for philosophy. Could two more able and brilliant conversationalists be found than Philippe de St. Gré and Madame la Vicomtesse? And there was the happiness of that strange but lovable young

man, Monsieur Temple, to contemplate. He was in luck, *ce beau garçon*, for he was getting an angel for his wife. Did Monsieur know that Mademoiselle Antoinette was an angel?

At last I was ready, arrayed in my best, on the gallery, when Monsieur de St. Gré came. André and another servant carried me down into the court, and there stood a painted sedan-chair with the St. Gré arms on the panels.

"My father imported it, David," said Monsieur de St. Gré. "It has not been used for many years. You are to be carried in it to the levee, and there I have a boat for you."

Overwhelmed by this kindness, I could not find words to thank him as I got into the chair. My legs were too long for it, I remember. I had a quaint feeling of unreality as I sank back on the red satin cushions and was borne out of the gate between the lions. Monsieur de St. Gré and Nick walked in front, the faithful Lindy followed, and people paused to stare at us as we passed. We crossed the Place d'Armes, the Royal Road, gained the willow-bordered promenade on the levee's crown, and a wide barge was waiting, manned by six negro oarsmen. They lifted me into its stern under the awning, the barge was cast off, the oars dipped, and we were gliding silently past the line of keel boats on the swift current of the Mississippi. The spars of the shipping were inky black, and the setting sun had struck a red band across the waters. For a while the three of us sat gazing at the green shore, each wrapped in his own reflections, — Philippe de St. Gré thinking, perchance, of the wayward son he had lost; Nick of the woman who awaited him; and I of one whom fate had set beyond me. It was Monsieur de St. Gré who broke the silence at last.

"You feel no ill effects from your moving, David?" he asked, with an anxious glance at me.

"None, sir," I said.

"The country air will do you good," he said kindly.

"And Madame la Vicomtesse will put him on a diet," added Nick, rousing himself.

"Hélène will take care of him," answered Monsieur de St. Gré.

He fell to musing again. "Madame la Vicomtesse has seen more in seven years than most of us see in a lifetime," he said. "She has beheld the glory of France, and the dishonor and pollution of her country. Had the old order lasted her salon would have been famous, and she would have been a power in politics."

"I have thought that the Vicomtesse must have had a queer marriage," Nick remarked.

Monsieur de St. Gré smiled.

"Such marriages were the rule amongst our nobility," he said. "It was arranged while Hélène was still in the convent, though it was not celebrated until three years after she had been in the world. There was a romantic affair, I believe, with a young gentleman of the English embassy, though I do not know the details. He is said to be the only man she ever cared for. He was a younger son of an impoverished earl."

I started, remembering what the Vicomtesse had said. But Monsieur de St. Gré did not appear to see my perturbation.

"Be that as it may, if Hélène suffered, she never gave a sign of it. The marriage was celebrated with great pomp, and the world could only conjecture what she thought of the Vicomte. It was deemed on both sides a brilliant match. He had inherited vast estates, *Ivry-le-Tour*, *Montméry*, *Les Saillantes*, I know not what else. She was heiress to the Château de St. Gré with its wide lands, to the château and lands of the *Côte Rouge* in Normandy, to the hotel St. Gré in Paris. Monsieur le Vicomte was between forty and fifty at his marriage, and from what I have heard of him he had many of the virtues and many of the faults of his order. He was a bachelor, which does not mean that he had lacked consolations. He was reserved with his equals, and distant with others. He had served in the Guards, and did not lack courage. He dressed exquisitely, was inclined to the Polignac party, took his ease everywhere, had a knowledge

of cards and courts, and little else. He was cheated by his stewards, refused to believe that the Revolution was serious, and would undoubtedly have been guillotined had the Vicomtesse not contrived to get him out of France in spite of himself. They went first to the Duke de Ligne, at Bel Oeil, and thence to Coblentz. He accepted a commission in the Austrian service, which is much to his credit, and Hélène went with some friends to England. There my letter reached her, and rather than be beholden to strangers or accept my money there, she came to us. That is her story in brief, Messieurs. As for Monsieur le Vicomte, he admired his wife, as well he might, respected her for the way she served the gallants, but he made no pretence of loving her. One affair — a girl in the village of Montméry — had lasted. Hélène was destined for higher things than may be found in Louisiana," said Monsieur de St. Gré, turning to Nick, "but now that you are to carry away my treasure, Monsieur, I do not know what I should have done without her."

"And has there been any news of the Vicomte of late?"

It was Nick who asked the question, after a little. Monsieur de St. Gré looked at him in surprise.

"Eh, *mon Dieu*, have you not heard?" he said. "*C'est vrai*, you have been with David. Did not the Vicomtesse mention it? But why should she? Monsieur le Vicomte died in Vienna. He had lived too well."

"The Vicomte is dead?" I said.

They both looked at me. Indeed, I should not have recognized my own voice. What my face betrayed, what my feelings were, I cannot say. My heart beat no faster, there was no tumult in my brain, and yet — my breath caught strangely. Something grew within me which is beyond the measure of speech, and so it was meant to be.

"I did not know this myself until Hélène returned to Les Îles," Monsieur de St. Gré was saying to me. "The letter came to her the day after you were taken ill. It was from the Baron von Seckenbrück, at whose house the Vicomte died. She took it very calmly, for Hélène is not a woman to pretend. How much better, after all, if she

had married her Englishman for love! And she is much troubled now because, as she declares, she is dependent upon my bounty. That is my happiness, my consolation," the good man added simply, "and her father, the Marquis, was kind to me when I was a young provincial and a stranger. God rest his soul!"

We were drawing near to Les Îles. The rains had come during my illness, and in the level evening light the forest of the shore was the tender green of spring. At length we saw the white wooden steps in the levee at the landing, and near them were three figures waiting. We glided nearer. One was Madame de St. Gré, another was Antoinette, — these I saw indeed. The other was Hélène, and it seemed to me that her eyes met mine across the waters and drew them. Then we were at the landing. I heard Madame de St. Gré's voice, and Antoinette's in welcome — I listened for another. I saw Nick running up the steps; in the impetuosity of his love he had seized Antoinette's hand in his, and she was the color of a red rose. Creole decorum forbade further advances. André and another lifted me out, and they gathered around me, — these kind people and devoted friends, — Antoinette calling me, with exquisite shyness, by name; Madame de St. Gré giving me a grave but gentle welcome, and asking anxiously how I stood the journey. Another took my hand, held it for the briefest space that has been marked out of time, and for that instant I looked into her eyes. Life flowed back into me, and strength, and a joy not to be fathomed. I could have walked; but they bore me through the well-remembered vista, and the white gallery at the end of it was like the sight of home. The evening air was laden with the scent of the sweetest of all shrubs and flowers.

CHAPTER XIV

"TO UNPATHED WATERS, UNDREAMED SHORES"

MONSIEUR and Madame de St. Gré themselves came with me to my chamber off the gallery, where everything was prepared for my arrival with the most loving care, — Monsieur de St. Gré supplying many things from his wardrobe which I lacked. And when I tried to thank them for their kindness he laid his hand upon my shoulder.

"*Tenez, mon ami*," he said, "you got your illness by doing things for other people. It is time other people did something for you."

Lindy brought me the daintiest of suppers, and I was left to my meditations. Nick looked in at the door, and hinted darkly that I had to thank a certain tyrant for my abandonment. I called to him, but he paid no heed, and I heard him chuckling as he retreated along the gallery. The journey, the excitement into which I had been plunged by the news I had heard, brought on a languor, and I was between sleeping and waking half the night. I slept to dream of her, of the Vicomte, her husband, walking in his park or playing cards amidst a brilliant company in a great candle-lit room like the drawing-room at Temple Bow. Doubt grew, and sleep left me. She was free now, indeed, but was she any nearer to me? Hope grew again, — why had she left me in New Orleans? She had received a letter, and if she had cared she would not have remained. But there was a detestable argument to fit that likewise, and in the light of this argument it was most natural that she should return to Les Îles. And who was I, David Ritchie, a lawyer of the little town of Louisville,

to aspire to the love of such a creature? Was it likely that Hélène, Vicomtesse d'Ivry-le-Tour, would think twice of me? The powers of the world were making ready to crush the presumptuous France of the Jacobins, and the France of King and Aristocracy would be restored. Châteaux and lands would be hers again, and she would go back again to that brilliant life among the great to which she was born, for which nature had fitted her. Last of all was the thought of the Englishman whom I resembled. She would go back to him.

Nick was the first in my room the next morning. He had risen early (so he ingenuously informed me) because Antoinette had a habit of getting up with the birds, and as I drank my coffee he was emphatic in his denunciations of the customs of the country.

"It is a wonderful day, Davy," he cried; "you must hurry and get out. Monsieur de St. Gré sends his compliments, and wishes to know if you will pardon his absence this morning. He is going to escort Antoinette and me over to see some of my prospective cousins, the Bertrands." He made a face, and bent nearer to my ear. "I swear to you I have not had one moment alone with her. We have been for a walk, but Madame la Vicomtesse must needs intrude herself upon us. Egad, I told her plainly what I thought of her tyranny."

"And what did she say?" I asked, trying to smile.

"She laughed, and said that I belonged to a young nation which had done much harm in the world to everybody but themselves. Faith, if I wasn't in love with Antoinette, I believe I'd be in love with her."

"I have no doubt of it," I answered.

"The Vicomtesse is as handsome as a queen this morning," he continued, paying no heed to this remark. "She has on a linen dress that puzzles me. It was made to walk among the trees and flowers, it is as simple as you please; and yet it has a distinction that makes you stare."

"You seem to have stared," I answered. "Since when did you take such interest in gowns?"

"Bless you, it was Antoinette. I never should have known," said he. "Antoinette had never before seen the gown, and she asked the Vicomtesse where she got the pattern. The Vicomtesse said that the gown had been made by Léonard, a court dressmaker, and it was of the fashion the Queen had set to wear in the gardens of the Trianon when simplicity became the craze. Antoinette is to have it copied, so she says."

Which proved that Antoinette was human, after all, and happy once more.

"Hang it," said Nick, "she paid more attention to that gown than to me. Good-by, Davy. Obey the — the Colonel."

"Is — is not the Vicomtesse going with you?" I asked.

"No, I'm sorry for you," he called back from the gallery.

He had need to be, for I fell into as great a fright as ever I had had in my life. Monsieur de St. Gré knocked at the door and startled me out of my wits. Hearing that I was awake, he had come in person to make his excuses for leaving me that morning.

"*Bon Dieu!*" he said, looking at me, "the country has done you good already. Behold a marvel! *Au revoir*, David."

I heard the horses being brought around, and laughter and voices. How easily I distinguished hers! Then I heard the hoof-beats on the soft dirt of the drive. Then silence, — the silence of a summer morning which is all myriad sweet sounds. Then Lindy appeared, starched and turbaned.

"Marse Dave, how you feel dis mawnin'? Yo' 'pears mighty peart, sholy. Marse Dave, yo' chair is sot on de gallery. Is you ready? I'll fotch dat yaller nigger, André."

"You needn't fetch André," I said; "I can walk."

"Lan' sakes, Marse Dave, but you is bumptious."

I rose and walked out on the gallery with surprising steadiness. A great cushioned chair had been placed there, and beside it a table with books, and another chair. I sat down. Lindy looked at me sharply, but I did not heed

her, and presently she retired. The day, still in its early golden glory, seemed big with prescience. Above, the saffron haze was lifted, and there was the blue sky. The breeze held its breath; the fragrance of grass and fruit and flowers, of the shrub that vied with all, languished on the air. Out of these things she came.

I knew that she was coming, but I saw her first at the gallery's end, the roses she held red against the white linen of her gown. Then I felt a great yearning and a great dread. I have seen many of her kind since, and none reflected so truly as she the life of the old régime. Her dress, her carriage, her air, all suggested it; and she might, as Nick said, have been walking in the gardens of the Trianon. Titles I cared nothing for. Hers alone seemed real, to put her far above me. Had all who bore them been as worthy, titles would have meant much to mankind.

She was coming swiftly. I rose to my feet before her. I believe I should have risen in death. And then she was standing beside me, looking up into my face.

"You must not do that," she said, "or I will go away."

I sat down again. She went to the door and called, I following her with my eyes. Lindy came with a bowl of water.

"Put it on the table," said the Vicomtesse.

Lindy put the bowl on the table, gave us a glance, and departed silently. The Vicomtesse began to arrange the flowers in the bowl, and I watched her, fascinated by her movements. She did everything quickly, deftly, but this matter took an unconscionable time. She did not so much as glance at me. She seemed to have forgotten my presence.

"There," she said at last, giving them a final touch. "You are less talkative, if anything, than usual this morning, Mr. Ritchie. You have not said good morning, you have not told me how you were — you have not even thanked me for the roses. One might almost believe that you are sorry to come to Les Îles."

"One might believe anything who didn't know, Madame la Vicomtesse."

She put her hand to the flowers again.

"It seems a pity to pick them, even in a good cause," she said.

She was so near me that I could have touched her. A weakness seized me, and speech was farther away than ever. She moved, she sat down and looked at me, and the kind of mocking smile came into her eyes that I knew was the forerunner of raillery.

"There is a statue in the gardens of Versailles which seems always about to speak, and then to think better of it. You remind me of that statue, Mr. Ritchie. It is the statue of Wisdom."

What did she mean?

"Wisdom knows the limitations of its own worth, Madame," I replied.

"It is the one particular in which I should have thought wisdom was lacking," she said. "You have a tongue, if you will deign to use it. Or shall I read to you?" she added quickly, picking up a book. "I have read to the Queen, when Madame Campan was tired. Her Majesty, poor dear lady, did me the honor to say she liked my English."

"You have done everything, Madame," I said.

"I have read to a Queen, to a King's sister, but never yet — to a King," she said, opening the book and giving me the briefest of glances. "You are all kings in America, are you not? What shall I read?"

"I would rather have you talk to me."

"Very well, I will tell you how the Queen spoke English. No, I will not do that," she said, a swift expression of sadness passing over her face. "I will never mock her again. She was a good sovereign and a brave woman, and I loved her." She was silent a moment, and I thought there was a great weariness in her voice when she spoke again. "I have every reason to thank God when I think of the terrors I escaped, of the friends I have found. And yet I am an unhappy woman, Mr. Ritchie."

"You are unhappy when you are not doing things for others, Madame," I suggested.

"I am a discontented woman," she said; "I always have been. And I am unhappy when I think of all those who were dear to me and whom I loved. Many are dead, and many are scattered and homeless."

"I have often thought of your sorrows, Madame," I said.

"Which reminds me that I should not burden you with them, my good friend, when you are recovering. Do you know that you have been very near to death?"

"I know, Madame," I faltered. "I know that had it not been for you I should not be alive to-day. I know that you risked your life to save my own."

She did not answer at once, and when I looked at her she was gazing out over the flowers on the lawn.

"My life did not matter," she said. "Let us not talk of that."

I might have answered, but I dared not speak for fear of saying what was in my heart. And while I trembled with the repression of it, she was changed. She turned her face towards me and smiled a little.

"If you had obeyed me you would not have been so ill," she said.

"Then I am glad that I did not obey you."

"Your cousin, the irrepressible Mr. Temple, says I am a tyrant. Come now, do you think me a tyrant?"

"He has also said other things of you."

"What other things?"

I blushed at my own boldness.

"He said that if he were not in love with Antoinette, he would be in love with you."

"A very safe compliment," said the Vicomtesse. "Indeed, it sounds too cautious for Mr. Temple. You must have tampered with it, Mr. Ritchie," she flashed. "Mr. Temple is a boy. He needs discipline. He will have too easy a time with Antoinette."

"He is not the sort of man you should marry," I said, and sat amazed at it.

She looked at me strangely.

"No, he is not," she answered. "He is more or less the sort of man I have been thrown with all my life. They toil not, neither do they spin. I know you will not misunderstand me, for I am very fond of him. Mr. Temple is honest, fearless, lovable, and of good instincts. One cannot say as much for the rest of his type. They go through life fighting, gaming, horse-racing, riding to hounds, — I have often thought that it was no wonder our privileges came to an end. So many of us were steeped in selfishness and vice, were a burden on the world. The early nobles, with all their crimes, were men who carved their way. Of such were the lords of the Marches. We toyed with politics, with simplicity, we wasted the land, we played cards as our coaches passed through famine-stricken villages. The reckoning came. Our punishment was not given into the hands of the bourgeois, who would have dealt justly, but to the scum, the *canaille*, the demons of the earth. Had our King, had our nobility, been men with the old fire, they would not have stood it. They were worn out with centuries of catering to themselves. Give me a man who will shape his life and live it with all his strength. I am tired of sham and pretence, of cynical wit, of mocking at the real things of life, of pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy. Give me a man whose existence means something."

Was she thinking of the Englishman of whom she had spoken? Delicacy forbade my asking the question. He had been a man, according to her own testimony. Where was he now? Her voice had a ring of earnestness in it I had never heard before, and this arraignment of her own life and of her old friends surprised me. Now she seemed lost in a revery, from which I forebore to arouse her.

"I have often tried to picture your life," I said at last.

"You?" she answered, turning her head quickly. "Often?"

"Ever since I first saw the miniature," I said. "Monsieur de St. Gré told me some things, and afterwards I read 'Le Mariage de Figaro,' and some novels, and some

memoirs of the old courts which I got in Philadelphia last winter. I used to think of you as I rode over the mountains, as I sat reading in my room of an evening. I used to picture you in the palaces amusing the Queen and making the Cardinals laugh. And then I used to wonder — what became of you — and whether — " I hesitated, overwhelmed by a sudden confusion, for she was gazing at me fixedly with a look I did not understand.

" You used to think of that ? " she said.

" I never thought to see you," I answered.

Laughter came into her eyes, and I knew that I had not vexed her. But I had spoken stupidly, and I reddened.

" I had a quick tongue," she said, as though to cover my confusion. " I have it yet. In those days misfortune had not curbed it. I had not learned to be charitable. When I was a child I used to ride with my father to the hunts at St. Gré, and I was too ready to pick out the weaknesses of his guests. If one of the company had a trick or a mannerism, I never failed to catch it. People used to ask me what I thought of such and such a person, and that was bad for me. I saw their failings and pretensions, but I ignored my own. It was the same at *Abbaye aux Bois*, the convent where I was taught. When I was presented to her Majesty I saw why people hated her. They did not understand her. She was a woman with a large heart, with charity. Some did not suspect this, others forgot it because they beheld a brilliant personage with keen perceptions who would not submit to being bored. Her Majesty made many enemies at court of persons who believed she was making fun of them. There was a dressmaker at the French court called Mademoiselle Bertin, who became ridiculously pretentious because the Queen allowed the woman to dress her hair in private. Bertin used to put on airs with the nobility when they came to order gowns, and she was very rude to me when I went for my court dress. There was a ball at Versailles the day I was presented, and my father told me that her Majesty wished to speak with me. I was very much frightened. The Queen was standing with her back to

the mirror, the Duchesse de Polignac and some other ladies beside her, when my father brought me up, and her Majesty was smiling.

"'What did you say to Bertin, Mademoiselle?' she asked.

"I was more frightened than ever, but the remembrance of the woman's impudence got the better of me.

"'I told her that in dressing your Majesty's hair she had acquired all the court accomplishments but one.'

"'I'll warrant that Bertin was curious,' said the Queen.

"'She was, your Majesty.'

"'What is the accomplishment she lacks?' the Queen demanded; 'I should like to know it myself.'

"'It is discrimination, your Majesty. I told the woman there were some people she could be rude to with impunity. I was not one of them.'

"'She'll never be rude to you again, Mademoiselle,' said the Queen.

"'I am sure of it, your Majesty,' I said.

"The Queen laughed, and bade the Duchesse de Polignac invite me to supper that evening. My father was delighted, — I was more frightened than ever. But the party was small, her Majesty was very gracious and spoke to me often, and I saw that above all things she liked to be amused. Poor lady! It was a year after that terrible affair of the necklace, and she wished to be distracted from thinking of the calumnies which were being heaped upon her. She used to send for me often during the years that followed, and I might have had a place at court near her person. But my father was sensible enough to advise me not to accept, — if I could refuse without offending her Majesty. The Queen was not offended; she was good enough to say that I was wise in my request. She had, indeed, abolished most of the ridiculous etiquette of the court. She would not eat in public, she would not be followed around the palace by ladies in court gowns, she would not have her ladies in the room when she was dressing. If she wished a mirror, she would not wait for it to be passed through half a dozen hands and handed

her by a Princess of the Blood. Sometimes she used to summon me to amuse her and walk with me by the water in the beautiful gardens of the *Petit Trianon*. I used to imitate the people she disliked. I disliked them, too. I have seen her laugh until the tears came into her eyes when I talked of Monsieur Necker. As the dark days drew nearer I loved more and more to be in the seclusion of the country at Montméry, at the St. Gré of my girlhood. I can see St. Gré now," said the Vicomtesse, "the thatched houses of the little village on either side of the high-road, the honest, red-faced peasants courtesying in their doorways at our *berline*, the brick wall of the park, the iron gates beside the lodge, the long avenue of poplars, the deer feeding in the beechwood, the bridge over the shining stream and the long, weather-beaten château beyond it. Paris and the muttering of the storm were far away. The mornings on the sunny terrace looking across the valley to the blue hills, the walks in the village, grew very dear to me. We do not know the value of things, Mr. Ritchie, until we are about to lose them."

"You did not go back to court?" I asked.

She sighed.

"Yes, I went back. I thought it my duty. I was at Versailles that terrible summer when the States General met, when the National Assembly grew out of it, when the Bastille was stormed, when the King was throwing away his prerogatives like confetti. Never did the gardens of the Trianon seem more beautiful, or more sad. Sometimes the Queen would laugh even then when I mimicked Bailly, Des Moulins, Mirabeau. I was with her Majesty in the gardens on that dark, rainy day when the fishwomen came to Versailles. The memory of that night will haunt me as long as I live. The wind howled, the rain lashed with fury against the windows, the mob tore through the streets of the town, sacked the wine-shops, built great fires at the corners. Before the day dawned again the furies had broken into the palace and murdered what was left of the Guard. You have heard how they carried off the King and Queen to Paris — how they bore

the heads of the soldiers on their pikes. I saw it from a window, and I shall never forget it."

Her voice faltered, and there were tears on her lashes. Some quality in her narration brought before me so vividly the scenes of which she spoke that I started when she had finished. There was much more I would have known, but I could not press her to speak longer on a subject that gave her pain. At that moment she seemed more distant to me than ever before. She rose, went into the house, and left me thinking of the presumptions of the hopes I had dared to entertain, left me picturing sadly the existence of which she had spoken. Why had she told me of it? Perchance she had thought to do me a kindness!

She came back to me — I had not thought she would. She sat down with her embroidery in her lap, and for some moments busied herself with it in silence. Then she said, without looking up: —

"I do not know why I have tired you with this, why I have saddened myself. It is past and gone."

"I was not tired, Madame. It is very difficult to live in the present when the past has been so brilliant," I answered.

"So brilliant!" She sighed. "So thoughtless, — I think that is the sharpest regret." I watched her fingers as they stitched, wondering how they could work so rapidly. At last she said in a low voice, "Antoinette and Mr. Temple have told me something of your life, Mr. Ritchie."

I laughed.

"It has been very humble," I replied.

"What I heard was — interesting to me," she said, turning over her frame. "Will you not tell me something of it?"

"Gladly, Madame, if that is the case," I answered.

"Well, then," she said, "why don't you?"

"I do not know which part you would like, Madame. Shall I tell you about Colonel Clark? I do not know when to begin — "

She dropped her sewing in her lap and looked up at me quickly.

"I told you that you were a strange man," she said. "I almost lose patience with you. No, don't tell me about Colonel Clark — at least not until you come to him. Begin at the beginning, at the cabin in the mountains."

"You want the whole of it!" I exclaimed.

She picked up her embroidery again and bent over it with a smile.

"Yes, I want the whole of it."

So I began at the cabin in the mountains. I cannot say that I ever forgot she was listening, but I lost myself in the narrative. It presented to me, for the first time, many aspects that I had not thought of. For instance, that I should be here now in Louisiana telling it to one who had been the companion and friend of the Queen of France. Once in a while the Vicomtesse would look up at me swiftly, when I paused, and then go on with her work again. I told her of Temple Bow, and how I had run away; of Polly Ann and Tom, of the Wilderness Trail and how I shot Cutcheon, of the fight at Crab Orchard, of the life in Kentucky, of Clark and his campaign. Of my doings since; how I had found Nick and how he had come to New Orleans with me; of my life as a lawyer in Louisville, of the conventions I had been to. The morning wore on to midday, and I told her more than I believed it possible to tell any one. When at last I had finished a fear grew upon me that I had told her too much. Her fingers still stitched, her head was bent and I could not see her face, — only the knot of her hair coiled with an art that struck me suddenly. Then she spoke, and her voice was very low.

"I love Polly Ann," she said; "I should like to know her."

"I wish that you could know her," I answered, quickening.

She raised her head, and looked at me with an expression that was not a smile. I could not say what it was, or what it meant.

"I do not think you are stupid," she said, in the same tone, "but I do not believe you know how remarkable

your life has been. I can scarcely realize that you have seen all this, have done all this, have felt all this. You are a lawyer, a man of affairs, and yet you could guide me over the hidden paths of half a continent. You know the mountain ranges, the passes, the rivers, the fords, the forest trails, the towns and the men who made them!" She picked up her sewing and bent over it once more. "And yet you did not think that this would interest me."

Perchance it was a subtle summons in her voice I heard that bade me open the flood-gates of my heart, — I know not. I know only that no power on earth could have held me silent then.

"Hélène!" I said, and stopped. My heart beat so wildly that I could hear it. "I do not know why I should dare to think of you, to look up to you — Hélène, I love you, I shall love you till I die. I love you with all the strength that is in me, with all my soul. You know it, and if you did not I could hide it no more. As long as I live there will never be another woman in the world for me. I love you. You will forgive me because of the torture I have suffered, because of the pain I shall suffer when I think of you in the years to come."

Her sewing dropped to her lap — to the floor. She looked at me, and the light which I saw in her eyes flooded my soul with a joy beyond my belief. I trembled with a wonder that benumbed me. I would have got to my feet had she not come to me swiftly, that I might not rise. She stood above me, I lifted up my arms; she bent to me with a movement that conferred a priceless thing.

"David," she said, "could you not tell that I loved you, that you were he who has been in my mind for so many years, and in my heart since I saw you?"

"I could not tell," I said. "I dared not think it. I — I thought there was another."

She was seated on the arm of my chair. She drew back her head with a smile trembling on her lips, with a lustre burning in her eyes like a vigil — a vigil for me.

"He reminded me of you," she answered.

I was lost in sheer, bewildering happiness. And she

who created it, who herself was that happiness, roused me from it.

"What are you thinking?" she asked.

"I was thinking that a star has fallen, — that I may have a jewel beyond other men," I said.

"And a star has risen for me," she said, "that I may have a guide beyond other women."

"Then it is you who have raised it, Hélène." I was silent a moment, trying again to bring the matter within my grasp. "Do you mean that you love me, that you will marry me, that you will come back to Kentucky with me and will be content, — you, who have been the companion of a Queen?"

There came an archness into her look that inflamed me the more.

"I, who have been the companion of a Queen, love you, will marry you, will go back to Kentucky with you and be content," she repeated. "And yet not I, David, but another woman — a happy woman. You shall be my refuge, my strength, my guide. You will lead me over the mountains and through the wilderness by the paths you know. You will bring me to Polly Ann that I may thank her for the gift of you, — above all other gifts in the world."

I was silent again.

"Hélène," I said at last, "will you give me the miniature?"

"On one condition," she replied.

"Yes," I said, "yes. And again yes. What is it?"

"That you will obey me — sometimes."

"It is a privilege I long for," I answered.

"You did not begin with promise," she said.

I released her hand, and she drew the ivory from her gown and gave it me. I kissed it.

"I will go to Monsieur Isadore's and get the frame," I said.

"When I give you permission," said Hélène, gently.

I have written this story for her eyes.

CHAPTER XV

AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF A MAN

Out of the blood and ashes of France a Man had arisen who moved real kings and queens on his chess-board — which was a large part of the world. The Man was Napoleon Buonaparte, at present, for lack of a better name, First Consul of the French Republic. The Man's eye, sweeping the world for a new plaything, had rested upon one which had excited the fancy of lesser adventurers, of one John Law, for instance. It was a large, unwieldy plaything indeed, and remote. It was nothing less than that vast and mysterious country which lay beyond the monster yellow River of the Wilderness, the country bordered on the south by the Gulf swamps, on the north by no man knew what forests, — as dark as those the Romans found in Gaul, — on the west by a line which other generations might be left to settle.

This land was Louisiana.

A future king of France, while an *émigré*, had been to Louisiana. This is merely an interesting fact worth noting. It was not interesting to Napoleon.

Napoleon, by dint of certain screws which he tightened on his Catholic Majesty, King Charles of Spain, in the Treaty of San Ildefonso on the 1st of October, 1800, got his plaything. Louisiana was French again, — whatever French was in those days. The treaty was a profound secret. But secrets leak out, even the profoundest; and this was wafted across the English Channel to the ears of Mr. Rufus King, American Minister at London, who wrote of it to one Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States. Mr. Jefferson was interested, not to say alarmed.

Mr. Robert Livingston was about to depart on his mission from the little Republic of America to the great Republic of France. Mr. Livingston was told not to make himself disagreeable, but to protest. If Spain was to give up the plaything, the Youngest Child among the Nations ought to have it. It lay at her doors, it was necessary for her growth.

Mr. Livingston arrived in France to find that Louisiana was a mere pawn on the chess-board, the Republic he represented little more. He protested, and the great Talleyrand shrugged his shoulders. What was Monsieur talking about? A treaty. What treaty? A treaty with Spain ceding back Louisiana to France after forty years. Who said there was such a treaty? Did Monsieur take snuff? Would Monsieur call again when the Minister was less busy?

Monsieur did call again, taking care not to make himself disagreeable. He was offered snuff. He called again, pleasantly. He was offered snuff. He called again. The great Talleyrand laughed. He was always so happy to see Monsieur when he (Talleyrand) was not busy. He would give Monsieur a certificate of importunity. He had quite forgotten what Monsieur was talking about on former occasions. Oh, yes, a treaty. Well, suppose there was such a treaty, what then?

What then? Mr. Livingston, the agreeable but importunate, went home and wrote a memorial, and was presently assured that the inaccessible Man who was called First Consul had read it with interest — great interest. Mr. Livingston did not cease to indulge in his enjoyable visits to Talleyrand — not he. But in the intervals he sat down to think.

What did the inaccessible Man himself have in his mind?

The Man had been considering the Anglo-Saxon race, and in particular that portion of it which inhabited the Western Hemisphere. He perceived that they were a quarrelsome people, which possessed the lust for land and conquest like the rest of their blood. He saw with

astonishment something that had happened, something that they had done. Unperceived by the world, in five and twenty years they had swept across a thousand miles of mountain and forest wilderness in ever increasing thousands, had beaten the fiercest of savage tribes before them, stolidly unmindful of their dead. They had come at length to the great yellow River, and finding it closed had cried aloud in their anger. What was beyond it to stop them? Spain, with a handful of subjects inherited from the France of Louis the Fifteenth.

Could Spain stop them? No. But he, the Man, would stop them. He would raise up in Louisiana as a monument to himself a daughter of France to curb their ambition. America should not be all Anglo-Saxon.

Already the Americans had compelled Spain to open the River. How long before they would overrun Louisiana itself, until a Frenchman or a Spaniard could scarce be found in the land?

Sadly, in accordance with the treaty which Monsieur Talleyrand had known nothing about, his Catholic Majesty instructed his Intendant at New Orleans to make ready to deliver Louisiana to the French Commission. That was in July, 1802. This was not exactly an order to close the River again — in fact, his Majesty said nothing about closing the River. Mark the reasoning of the Spanish mind. The Intendant closed the River as his plain duty. And Kentucky and Tennessee, wayward, belligerent infants who had outgrown their swaddling clothes, were heard from again. The Nation had learned to listen to them. The Nation was very angry. Mr. Hamilton and the Federalists and many others would have gone to war and seized the Floridas.

Mr. Jefferson said, "Wait and see what his Catholic Majesty has to say." Mr. Jefferson was a man of great wisdom, albeit he had mistaken Jacobinism for something else when he was younger. And he knew that Napoleon could not play chess in the wind. The wind was rising.

Mr. Livingston was a patriot, able, importunate, but getting on in years and a little hard of hearing. Impor-

tunity without an Army and a Navy behind it is not effective — especially when there is no wind. But Mr. Jefferson heard the wind rising, and he sent Mr. Monroe to Mr. Livingston's aid. Mr. Monroe was young, witty, lively, popular with people he met. He, too, heard the wind rising, and so now did Mr. Livingston.

The ships containing the advance guard of the colonists destined for the new Louisiana lay in the roads at Dunkirk, their anchors ready to weigh, — three thousand men, three thousand horses, for the Man did things on a large scale. The anchors were not weighed.

His Catholic Majesty sent word from Spain to Mr. Jefferson that he was sorry his Intendant had been so foolish. The River was opened again.

The Treaty of Amiens was a poor wind-shield. It blew down, and the chessmen began to totter. One George of England, noted for his frugal table and his quarrelsome disposition, who had previously fought with France, began to call the Man names. The Man called George names, and sat down to think quickly. George could not be said to be on the best of terms with his American relations, but the Anglo-Saxon is unsentimental, phlegmatic, setting money and trade and lands above ideals. George meant to go to war again. Napoleon also meant to go to war again. But George meant to go to war again right away, which was inconvenient and inconsiderate, for Napoleon had not finished his game of chess. The obvious outcome of the situation was that George with his Navy would get Louisiana, or else help his relations to get it. In either case Louisiana would become Anglo-Saxon.

This was the wind which Mr. Jefferson had heard.

The Man, being a genius who let go gracefully when he had to, decided between two bad bargains. He would sell Louisiana to the Americans as a favor ; they would be very, very grateful, and they would go on hating George. Moreover, he would have all the more money with which to fight George.

The inaccessible Man suddenly became accessible. Nay, he became gracious, smiling, full of loving-kindness, chari-

table. Certain dickerings followed by a bargain passed between the American Minister and Monsieur Barbé-Marbois. Then Mr. Livingston and Mr. Monroe dined with the hitherto inaccessible. And the Man, after the manner of Continental Personages, asked questions. Frederick the Great has started this fashion, and many have imitated it.

Louisiana became American at last. Whether by destiny or chance, whether by the wisdom of Jefferson or the necessity of Napoleon, who can say? It seems to me, David Ritchie, writing many years after the closing words of the last chapter were penned, that it was ours inevitably. For I have seen and known and loved the people with all their crudities and faults, whose inheritance it was by right of toil and suffering and blood.

And I, David Ritchie, saw the flags of three nations waving over it in the space of two days. And it came to pass in this wise.

Rumors of these things which I have told above had filled Kentucky from time to time, and in November of 1803 there came across the mountains the news that the Senate of the United States had ratified the treaty between our ministers and Napoleon.

I will not mention here what my life had become, what my fortune, save to say that both had been far beyond my expectations. In worldly goods and honors, in the respect and esteem of my fellow-men, I had been happy indeed. But I had been blessed above other men by one whose power it was to lift me above the mean and sordid things of this world.

Many times in the pursuit of my affairs I journeyed over that country which I had known when it belonged to the Indian and the deer and the elk and the wolf and the buffalo. Often did she ride by my side, making light of the hardships which, indeed, were no hardships to her, wondering at the settlements which had sprung up like magic in the wilderness, which were the heralds of the greatness of the Republic, — her country now.

So, in the bright and boisterous March weather of the

year 1804, we found ourselves riding together along the way made memorable by the footsteps of Clark and his backwoodsmen. For I had an errand in St. Louis with Colonel Chouteau. A subtle change had come upon Kaskaskia with the new blood which was flowing into it: we passed Cahokia, full of memories to the drummer boy whom she loved. There was the church, the garrison, the stream, and the little house where my Colonel and I had lived together. She must see them all, she must hear the story from my lips again; and the telling of it to her gave it a new fire and a new life.

At evening, when the March wind had torn the cotton clouds to shreds, we stood on the Mississippi's bank, gazing at the western shore, at Louisiana. The low, forest-clad hills made a black band against the sky, and above the band hung the sun, a red ball. He was setting, and man might look upon his face without fear. The sight of the waters of that river stirred me to think of many things. What had God in store for the vast land out of which the waters flowed? Had He, indeed, saved it for a People, a People to be drawn from all nations, from all classes? Was the principle of the Republic to prevail and spread and change the complexion of the world? Or were the lusts of greed and power to increase until in the end they had swallowed the leaven? Who could say? What man of those who, soberly, had put his hand to the Paper which declared the opportunities of generations to come, could measure the Force which he had helped to set in motion.

We crossed the river to the village where I had been so kindly received many years ago — to St. Louis. The place was little changed. The wind was stilled, the blue wood smoke curled lazily from the wide stone chimneys of the houses nestling against the hill. The afterglow was fading into night; lights twinkled in the windows. Followed by our servants we climbed the bank, Hélène and I, and walked the quiet streets bordered by palings. The evening was chill. We passed a bright cabaret from which came the sound of many voices; in the blacksmith's

shop another group was gathered, and we saw faces eager in the red light. They were talking of the Cession.

We passed that place where Nick had stopped Suzanne in the cart, and laughed at the remembrance. We came to Monsieur Gratiot's, for he had bidden us to stay with him. And with Madame he gave us a welcome to warm our hearts after our journey.

"David," he said, "I have seen many strange things happen in my life, but the strangest of all is that Clark's drummer boy should have married a Vicomtesse of the old régime."

And she was ever Madame la Vicomtesse to our good friends in St. Louis, for she was a woman to whom a title came as by nature's right.

"And you are about to behold another strange thing, David," Monsieur Gratiot continued. "To-day you are on French territory."

"French territory!" I exclaimed.

"To-day Upper Louisiana is French," he answered. "To-morrow it will be American forever. This morning Captain Stoddard of the United States Army, empowered to act as a Commissioner of the French Republic, arrived with Captain Lewis and a guard of American troops. To-day, at noon, the flag of Spain was lowered from the staff at the headquarters. To-night a guard of honor watches with the French Tricolor, and we are French for the last time. To-morrow we shall be Americans."

I saw that simple ceremony. The little company of soldiers was drawn up before the low stone headquarters, the villagers with heads uncovered gathered round about. I saw the Stars and Stripes rising, the Tricolor setting. They met midway on the staff, hung together for a space, and a salute to the two nations echoed among the hills across the waters of the great River that rolled impassive by.

AFTERWORD

THIS book has been named "The Crossing" because I have tried to express in it the beginnings of that great movement across the mountains which swept resistless over the Continent until at last it saw the Pacific itself. The Crossing was the first instinctive reaching out of an infant nation which was one day to become a giant. No annals in the world's history are more wonderful than the story of the conquest of Kentucky and Tennessee by the pioneers.

This name, "The Crossing," is likewise typical in another sense. The political faith of our forefathers, of which the Constitution is the creed, was made to fit a more or less homogeneous body of people who proved that they knew the meaning of the word "Liberty." By Liberty, our forefathers meant the Duty as well as the Right of man to govern himself. The Constitution amply attests the greatness of its authors, but it was a compromise. It was an attempt to satisfy thirteen colonies, each of which clung tenaciously to its identity. It suited the eighteenth-century conditions of a little English-speaking confederacy along the seaboard, far removed from the world's strife and jealousy. It scarcely contemplated that the harassed millions of Europe would flock to its fold, and it did not foresee that, in less than a hundred years, its own citizens would sweep across the three thousand miles of forest and plain and mountain to the Western Ocean, absorb French and Spanish Louisiana, Spanish Texas, Mexico, and California, fill this land with broad farmsteads and populous cities, cover it with a network of railroads.

Would the Constitution, made to meet the needs of the little confederacy of the seaboard, stretch over a Continent and an Empire?

We are fighting out that question to-day. But The Crossing was in Daniel Boone's time, in George Rogers Clark's. Would the Constitution stand the strain? And will it stand the strain now that the once remote haven of the oppressed has become a world-power?

It was a difficult task in a novel to gather the elements necessary to picture this movement: the territory was vast, the types bewildering. The lonely mountain cabin; the seigniorial life of the tide-water; the foothills and mountains which the Scotch-Irish have marked for their own to this day; the Wilderness Trail; the wonderland of Kentucky, and the cruel fighting in the border forts there against the most relentless of foes; George Rogers Clark and his momentous campaign which gave to the Republic Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois; the transition period — the coming of the settler after the pioneer; Louisiana, St. Louis, and New Orleans, — to cover this ground, to picture the passions and politics of the time, to bring the counter influence of the French Revolution as near as possible to reality, has been a three years' task. The autobiography of David Ritchie is as near as I can get to its solution, and I have a great sense of its incompleteness.

I had hoped when I planned the series to bring down this novel through the stirring period which ended, by a chance, when a *steamboat* brought supplies to Jackson's army in New Orleans — the beginning of the era of steam commerce on our Western waters. This work will have to be reserved for a future time.

I have tried to give a true history of Clark's campaign as seen by an eyewitness, trammelled as little as possible by romance. Elsewhere, as I look back through these pages, I feel as though the soil had only been scraped. What principality in the world has the story to rival that of John Sevier and the State of Franklin? I have tried to tell the truth as I went along. General Jackson was a boy at the Waxhaws and dug his toes in the red mud. He was a man at Jonesboro, and tradition says that he fought with a fence-rail. Sevier was captured as narrated. Monsieur Gratiot, Monsieur Vigo, and Father Gibault lost the money

which they gave to Clark and their country. Monsieur Vigo actually travelled in the state which Davy describes when he went down the river with him. Monsieur Gratiot and Colonel Auguste Chouteau and Madame Chouteau are names so well known in St. Louis that it is superfluous to say that such persons existed and were the foremost citizens of the community.

Among the many to whom my apologies and thanks are due is Mr. Pierre Chouteau of St. Louis, whose unremitting labors have preserved and perpetuated the history and traditions of the country of his ancestors. I would that I had been better able to picture the character, the courage, the ability, and patriotism of the French who settled Louisiana. The Republic owes them much, and their descendants are to-day among the stanchest preservers of her ideals.

WINSTON CHURCHILL.

Boston, April 18, 1904.

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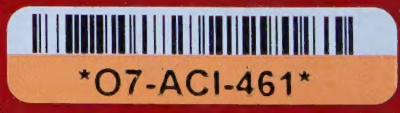
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